

# Navigating the Dilemma of Making Ethical Decisions: A Descriptive Qualitative Study

Elimelie P. Ates

Faculty of the Graduate School University of the Immaculate Conception Davao City

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study used a descriptive design to navigate the dilemmas encountered by the Public Junior High School Teachers in Davao City Division when making ethical decisions. The participants consisted of 17 Public Junior High School Teachers selected through snowball sampling, with 10 participants engaged in in-depth interviews (IDI) and 7 participants involved in focus group discussions (FGD). Data were gathered using validated interview guides in the in-depth interview and focus group discussion. Creswell's (2014) method of thematic analysis was used to determine the essential themes from the response of the participants. Making ethical decisions means doing the right thing, adherence to ethical standards, professional and personal integrity and navigating relationships were the themes that emerged from perceptions of participants on ethical decision-making. The strategies employed by the participants in ethical decision-making included mindful and values-driven process and reflective and critical thinking. Further, conflicting values and expectation, moral judgement, and difficulty in dealing with ethical issues were the themes that emerged from the challenges encountered by the participants in ethical decision-making. Furthermore, the themes such as: role of personal values, reflective ethical decision making, and being compassionate were the insights shared in improving ethical decision-making.

**Keywords:** Values Education, ethical decision-making, public junior high school teacher, ethical dilemmas, values and reflection, educational leadership, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Ethical decision making refers to the process of evaluating and choosing among alternatives in a manner consistent with ethical principles (Ferrell, Fraedrich, & Ferrell, 2019). It involves recognizing moral issues, making judgments based on ethical standards, and taking actions that reflect integrity, fairness, and responsibility. According to Treviño and Nelson (2021), this process helps ensure that decisions contribute to responsible and morally sound outcomes in organizational settings. This is especially needed when individuals get conflicted in complex processes involving values or even interests. According to Rest (1986), ethical decision making is a process used by individuals to select and justify their moral action.

In the contemporary global context, the ethical decision-making process has grown immensely complex that teachers encounter dilemmas on fairness, discipline, academic integrity, and student-wellbeing in educational institutions that pose ethical dilemmas. A study conducted by Karakuş, Gedik, and Kazazoğlu (2025) in Turkey examined teachers' ethical decision making in education by comparing teachers' responses to ethical dilemmas with the responses produced by AI. However, this study did not contain a rich qualitative analysis of the lived and nuanced ethical experiences of public secondary school teachers. Heikkilä et al. (2023) examined ethical issues teachers face and the connection to occupational wellbeing in Finland. Their study is mainly based on longitudinal quantitative data and lacks a rich qualitative analysis on teachers' decision-making in daily classroom situations. Also in Finland, Heikkilä et al. (2023) examined the ethical dilemmas in teachers' work life and how they link to occupational well-being. The study relies chiefly on longitudinal quantitative data. It lacks a rich qualitative analysis of teachers' decision-making in everyday classroom situations.

Teachers must handle fairness, student welfare and discipline. Furthermore, the quick integration of technology into teaching has complicated ethical decision making in the Philippine education system (Rodrigo, 2024). For instance, Escollada (2025), a study using phenomenological design conducted in the Philippine context, looked at the ethical dilemmas of secondary school teachers in making classroom decisions. Result found that teachers negotiated tensions between institutional policies, personal values, and student needs. Nevertheless, there is a lack of qualitative studies that delve deeper into how public secondary school teachers live through ethical experiences in everyday contexts. According to Jayuma and Baguio (2025), public secondary teachers have demonstrated a high level of decision-making practice in their everyday professional practice. With the increase in expectations and duties that teachers face both in class and the policy environment, the teachers must engage in sound ethical reasoning. The challenges and demands teachers face in public junior high schools are complex and may not always be straightforward.

Although researchers are paying increasing attention to ethical decision-making in education, existing studies reveal limitations. International study of Karakuş, Gedik and Kazazoğlu (2025) from Turkey and Heikkilä et al. (2023) from Finland on the ethical dilemmas of teachers were based mostly on quantitative and comparison studies with AI-generated responses. Therefore, they provided little insight into the lived experiences of teachers in real classroom conditions. The studies of Rodrigo (2024), Escollada (2025), Jayuma and Baguio (2025) involving the teachers' ethical dilemmas: between the school, the self, and the student show that in the Philippine setting, the teachers' ethical dilemma is relevant. However, there seems to be a lack of qualitative studies that look deeper into the ethical dilemma decisions of the public secondary school teachers, specifically junior high school teachers, in the everyday conduct of their practice. Plus, the quick use of technology in learning has complicated ethical decision-making (Rodrigo, 2024). This makes it vital to appreciate the way tenets teachers' use of professional teaching standards, fairness, and digital responsibility in real life classroom situation. As a result, this study intends to provide a descriptive qualitative account of the ethical decision-making experiences of public junior high school teachers in the Philippines.

This study holds significance because it will assess how public junior high school teachers in the division of Davao City manage their ethical dilemmas in the daily practice of their profession. It will give an insight into how the decision is made and justified within the classroom context (Escollada, 2025; Jayuma & Baguio, 2025). It shows the importance of promoting ethical reasoning and professional integrity to foster accountability and fairness in education (Ferrell, Fraedrich, & Ferrell, 2019; Rest, 1986; Treviño & Nelson, 2021). An aligned study to public goal 4 ensures quality education to all; study finds it studies equitable and inclusive teaching practices that benefit learner welfare and development (Rodrigo, 2024) In addition, our findings generate timely information for policy making, teacher education programs, and institutional reforms supporting the promotion of ethical and professional excellence in Philippine secondary schools (Karakuş, Gedik, & Kazazoğlu, 2025; Heikkilä et al., 2023).

The results of this study will be shared with relevant actors to make it relevant to educational practice and policy. Sharing of Results. The results of the study will be shared with the Department of Education particularly the Division of Davao City. This will be made through research presentations, policy briefs, or executive summaries that showcase the ethical challenges of public junior high school teachers and their strategies used in ethical decision-making. The result of the research would be presented in an academic conference, in-service trainings, and professional development seminars to enhance teacher education and to strengthen ethical reasoning and professional integrity. Finally, the study will be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed journals that will contribute to the scholarly discourse on ethical decision-making in education as well as institutional reforms for quality and inclusive education in line with UN SDG 4.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This descriptive qualitative study aims to explore the challenges encountered by teachers in the public junior high schools in the Division of Davao City in making ethical decisions in their work. Specifically, it investigates how teachers identify, think through, and justify being ethical when confronting everyday school-related dilemmas about fairness, punishment, cheating, students' welfare, and the increasing use of technology in the classroom. Using in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussions (FGD), the study provides rich insights into the teachers' ethical reasoning processes and the contextual factors in real classroom and institutional

settings that matter in deliberation making. Following the research title Navigating the Dilemma of Making Ethical Decisions, this study was aligned to Sustainable Development Goal 4 which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. Through the study of teachers lived ethical experiences, ethical, equitable, and learner-centered practices may be promoted and usage of data to inform the professional development on the implementation of ethical practices, values-based education, and policy. Understanding the ethical dilemmas faced by teachers may increase the effectiveness of teaching and contribute to a fairer, more responsive, and empowering educational system for Filipino students.

## Research Questions

To explore the challenges of making ethical decisions among the Public Junior High School Teachers in Davao City Division, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. How do the participants regard ethical decision-making?
2. What strategies do participants employ when making ethical decisions?
3. What challenges do the participants encounter when making ethical decisions?
4. What are insights can the participants share to improve their ethical decision-making?

## Theoretical Lens

The study was seen through the lens of **Theory of Moral Development** (Kohlberg, 1971) as its main theoretical lens which explains about how individuals develop progressively in their justification of moral behavior. Teachers encounter a range of ethical dilemmas that impact students' well-being, fairness, and professionalism. Using it as a lens, this study looks at how teachers' moral reasoning informs their actions in school environments, as well as helping interpret the criteria that underpins their ethical judgments. The author proposes that the situation is an excellent prospect to assess how Public High School Teachers deal with moral dilemmas in their employment (Santos, 2021; Bautista, 2021).

According to the results, the ethical decision-making of public junior high school teachers is a reflective process based on values and shaped by integrity, responsibility, and the reality of the school. The analysis of FGD and IDI data shows that teachers perceive ethical decision-making as doing the right thing as they meet ethical standards, use good morals, and skillfully deal with relations between conflicting values and expectations. Participants focused on mindful and critical engagement as well as compassion when balancing institutional policies with the welfare of learners and issues of discipline, justice, and scarce resources. The ethical procedures create safe, inclusive, and equitable learning settings and therefore enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning. In conclusion, ethical decision-making serves as a primary agent in support of quality, inclusive, learner-centered education outcomes for the implementation of SDG 4.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development relates to the current study as it serves as an actionable lens that understands how teachers' reason from a moral standpoint in their practice. The study's objective concerns the public junior high school teachers' ethical dilemmas. In making ethical decisions, which focuses on the ethical standards and the moral reasoning of the teachers. Thus, this theory's use is appropriate to explain the moral reasoning stages underlying teachers' ethical decisions. Also, are they rule-based. social expectation based. or principle based. In terms of what the outcome at junior high school teachers is not ethical. Teachers often face a variety of situations concerning students' well-being, discipline, fairness, and professionalism, usually calling for good moral judgment. Using Kohlberg's framework allows for a deeper understanding of how teachers' beliefs, reasoning patterns, and thinking processes affect the ethical decisions they make in school (Rest, 1986; Narvaez & Lapsley, 1999; Tirri, K., & Kuusisto, E. (2022).

## Importance of the Study

The results of the study were beneficial to the following:

Teachers. Knowing the ethical decision-making procedures of teachers will afford them better recognition of the elements that affect their choices and strengthen their ability to handle moral conflicts in the classroom. Study

findings could provide them tools to properly. Teachers show the right values so their students can follow their example.

School Administrators. The results can help educational leaders and school administrators create policies and practices supporting teachers' ethical decision-making. Recognizing the difficulties ESP teachers encounter will help them to carry out ethical training and professional development initiatives that improve teachers' ability and confidence in handling ethical concerns.

Students. Ultimately, improved ethical standards of ESP teachers will be of great help to the students and the greater school community. Making ethical decisions a top priority encourages students to develop critical thinking skills and ethical reasoning to make them more responsible and moral citizens.

### **Delimitation and Limitation of the Study**

This study focused on the real-life experiences of 17 selected teachers at public junior high schools in the division of Davao City as they handled ethical issues in work. The research examined what principles classroom teachers use when making ethical decisions in the classroom, in discipline, in upholding academic integrity, and in developing relationships with other professionals. This study only involved participants who had at least three years of teaching experience. This was since there was perceived to be a lot of ethical issues faced by them. Based on descriptive qualitative study the study use method within depth interview. They aimed to describe and explain the decision-making processes of participants and the moral reasoning that underpinned their actions, according to Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development. This descriptive qualitative study aims to explore the challenges faced by public junior high school teachers in the Division of Davao City as they navigate ethical decision-making in their professional practice.

The main limitation of the study was the use of self-reported data via in-depth interview data and thus may have influenced the participant's perception, memories, or response. The findings cannot be generalized to all teachers or educational contexts since they employed a qualitative design and a small purposive sample of public secondary school teachers. Furthermore, the differing subjectivities of various individuals when it comes to ethical dilemmas as well as decision-making processes which can be influenced by their subjective values, cultural background and contextual factors limited the consistency and comparability of the results. The quality of the data has also been weakened by pressures of time and the availability of participants. In conclusion, although the research utilized Kohlberg's theory of moral developments, it was not aided by any other theory to inspect ethical complication.

### **Definition of Terms**

For clarity, the following terms are defined operationally.

**Ethical Decision-Making.** Ethical decision-making entails the choice of deciding on some activities based on moral values, professional standards, and social norms, to which a person must make a judgement that is deemed as right or wrong. For all subject teachers, it means examining things, weighing the results of their decisions, and acting consistently in accordance with their decision which will give them the right to act according to want it children.

**Classroom Dilemma.** Classroom dilemmas occur when circumstances in classroom teaching and learning cause ESP teachers to be confronted with ethical dilemmas or conflicting principles requiring a thoughtful response. Such issues might range from disciplinary questions, justice, welfare of the students, and professional limits.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Discussed in these sections are the concepts and studies, relevant to the current study. The literature was taken from articles, journals, readings, and some research studies. The research brings forth vital concepts that aid in the analysis and interpretation of the ethical decision-making process of Public Junior High School Teachers. It also discusses prior studies that concern ethical decision-making related to teaching especially those that deal

with values education and multicultural perspectives.

## **Ethical Decision-Making**

Ethical decision-making in education involves how teachers deliberate on moral dilemmas and make choices grounded in their ethical beliefs, professional standards, and consideration of consequences in everyday practice. Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering students' capacity for ethical thinking and action, as they constantly balance demands for fairness, order, student welfare, and other competing educational values. Recent research indicates that when teachers encounter complex moral dilemmas, they draw on moral reasoning, empathy, and professional judgment to negotiate solutions that uphold student dignity and educational integrity (Qin, 2025).

Ethical decision-making is an ongoing process through which teachers reflect on difficult choices and make professional judgements based on ethical beliefs, professional standards, and concern for student well-being in all subject areas (Escollada, 2025). Teachers are significant persons who model and help children learn to think ethically as they face competing demands for fairness, order, inclusion and the rights and needs of diverse learners. Studies have found that when teachers face serious ethical dilemmas, they use reflective judgment, empathy, and professional principles in their decisions in the interest of equity in schooling.

Furthermore, Santos (2021), teachers may attain advanced levels of moral reasoning like the post-conventional level in Kohlberg's model by reading ethical case studies, obtaining feedback from peers, and interacting together to think about things. Tan (2014) further states that ensuring schools are safe places for ethical dialogue increases moral courage in people and helps them make better decisions.

Also, Bautista's (2021) descriptive qualitative research found "faith as anchor" and "moral mentorship" as new themes that help Catholic teachers in the Philippines improve morally. New ideas show how important it is to be culturally aware and to teach ethics in a way that is specific each culture. Eustaquio et al. (2025) in their narrative study reveal that the inclusion of Philippine literature in a teacher education program cultivates a deep process of inward cultural character-building as well as moral ethical reflection and self-awareness through response. Further, the authors conclude that ethical teaching must reside in the narratives of Filipino identity.

Mara (2025) claims that while curricula in all subjects are saturated with opportunities for ethical and values-based reflection, teachers often find it difficult to lead meaningful moral discussions because they have limited time to deal with the mandated content. Teachers, no matter the type of subject they teach, often do not have enough training, resources and professional support to include ethical reflection and values formation in their lessons (Mara 2025).

## **Lived Experiences of Teachers as regard to Ethical Decision-Making**

Foreign research on ethical decision-making in education notes that teacher is faced with moral dilemmas on a regular basis when they must juggle institutional rules, professional standards, and the welfare of learners (Heikkilä et al., 2023). The ethical decision-making process in practice is not just following policy but being reflective of morality. In this case, teachers' reason about what is right and just. In classrooms, ethical decisions impact teachers' instructional practice as well as students' character and moral development. Besides, it contributes to inclusive and equitable learning environments as per SDG 4. Research shows that teachers' ethical reasoning is consistently and progressively related to a moral development stage. Further, decisions are made not merely based on the authority of another person but based on a principle formed from the concept of justice, fairness, and human dignity. (Herlina, Sinring, & Ansari, 2024; Philosophy of Education in Ethical Decision-Making in the Classroom).

Research in the Philippine context suggests that teachers must be aware of codes of conduct and standards of behavior as moral agents who should make sound judgment calls in complex contexts (Ingaran et al., 2025). New phenomenological studies have revealed that Filipino teachers face frequent ethical dilemmas whereby they must negotiate their personal values, professional codes and learner needs, especially where existing policy frameworks are insufficiently specific to guide practice (Escollada, 2025). (Cherry Rose E. Escollada, 2025) Studies that investigate teachers' ethical considerations show that a lot of teachers' value ethics highly. In

addition, the findings could be explained in terms of Kohlberg's conventional and postconventional levels. Similarly, the moral action of teachers is guided by internalized standards of justice and commitment to others. (Factors Affecting Teacher Professionalism and Ethical Considerations, 2023). The teachers' engagement with ethical standards not only supports the moral development of the person but also helps educate the individual. Further, it endorses SDG 4 to have Quality, Equitable, and Inclusive Education by modelling ethical leadership and professional integrity in schools.

Teachers' personal responsibility can deter quality education negatively despite their strong moral commitments of teachers. This includes limited professional development on ethics, unclear ethical guidelines, and pressure from administrative demands that may conflict with the personal moral judgment of teachers. Filipino studies show teachers are aware of ethical standards. However, this knowledge does not translate into consistent professional practice most of the time. This is primarily due to institutional factors and the absence of structured support systems (Awareness and Compliance with R.A. 6713, 2025). In the same way, foreign research informs that ethical dilemma can negatively affect teachers' professional well-being and decision making. They point out that organizational climates and pressures from workload can inhibit the consistent application of moral reasoning (Tate case studies on teachers' ethical dilemmas, 2023; Ethical dilemmas and well-being in teachers' work, 2023). These challenges indicate a need for more ethics-focused professional development and supportive frameworks that could enhance more elevated levels of moral reasoning and enable teachers to better contribute to the SDG 4 goals.

### **Ethical Dilemmas Encountered by Public Junior High School Teachers**

Teachers at Public Junior High School in varied subjects often encounter ethical dilemmas in managing classes, conflicting values, personal beliefs and values, institutional policies, and the curriculum mandate/expectation. Teachers are often asked to remain professionally neutral on issues that raise moral concerns about their students' discipline, assessment, and behavior. Teachers find themselves in situations that are ethically tricky as the requirement for professional judgement intersects with care of students and accountability. According to Campbell (2019), teachers are faced with ethical dilemmas as they must negotiate their professional obligations along with their moral commitments to fairness and students. The similar paper by Shapira-Lishchinsky (2020) explains that the moral tension can lead to too much moral distress when teachers feel institutional expectations differ from their morals.

In culturally diverse classrooms, teachers may experience ethical dilemmas when they need to respond to students' differing values, beliefs, and social experiences, but still ensure equitable. A teacher in public junior high schools should respond to these differences to avoid bias, exclusion, or marginalization. It is essential for educators to use critical reflection of the ethical responsibility of teachers that multicultural education demands. Moreover, and how it shapes design. In supporting this notion, Gay (2018) highlights that teachers' ethical competence is strongly connected to their ability to acknowledge cultural diversity and act fairly and inclusively in instructional and disciplinary decisions.

Furthermore, culturally responsive, and relevant teaching has been recognized as an essential practice in managing ethical challenges in diverse school contexts. Teachers must utilize students' cultural knowledge and lived experience to advance significant and meaningful learning and support the teaching of shared ethics respect responsibility and social justice. According to Ladson-Billings (2021), culturally relevant pedagogy allows teachers to address ethical issues by relating academic content to the social realities of their students. Despite the ideal, achieving this balance proves to be difficult relevance of standardized curricula and institutional norms for teachers. Villegas and Lucas (2021) assessed the need for continuous professional development and reflective practice to strengthen teachers' ethical decision-making and responsiveness in multicultural classrooms.

### **Teacher Responsibility and Professional Ethics**

In the Philippines, Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers defines the ethical and professional responsibilities of all licensed teachers, including those in public secondary schools. This Code embodies the ideals of honesty, justice, respect, and devotedness to duty in all professional relationships. It Places responsibility upon the teacher to uphold the dignity and honor and the profession and the values of the Institutions. It would also teacher be

able to promote the growth and learning of students. The Code adopted by the Board for Professional Teachers because of the 2009 law must be strictly followed by Filipino teachers. This will ensure the professional and the public's faith in education. Moreover, research findings revealed that professional ethics build on classroom management and positive relationships between teachers and students as well as the school climate and school outcomes (Aksekili et al., 2016).

Teachers are answerable for the way their ethical norms are abided by and for the professional decisions that will make the core responsibilities of the teacher profession. Commitment to the learning of every student, integrity in assessment practice and treatment of all learners equitably. Teachers' actions boost public confidence in schools. Ethical responsibility promotes teachers' integrity and fairness in their dealings with students, fellow teachers, and parents. Research indicates that a teacher's professional ethics is positively related to better behavior, attitude, performance, and accountability in the school (Ladica & Osias, 2025).

Teachers make significant contribution in shaping the character and moral of the students by setting examples, discussing morals, and making reflections. To teach character education well, teachers should deliberately bring values into learning and teaching, so that students gain not just academic knowledge, but also ethical sensitivity and ethical decision making. Teacher education research shows that values education needs not just knowledge of content, but also the moral dispositions and reflective capacities of the teachers themselves (Paschal, 2024).

Teachers' ethical awareness and empathy toward others also play a role in classroom value education. With understanding the perspectives of students, empathy can help teachers establish compassion and deal with complex ethical issues. According to educational researchers, empathy is an important component of moral education. Teachers who encourage students to take the perspective of others and empathize with their plight helps with moral education (Gülsün Şahan, 2018).

### **Coping Strategies of Teachers in Ethical Dilemmas**

To deal with the integrity and mental health of the individual, teachers use different ways. According to Cruz and Reyes in 2020, Filipino teachers utilize peer support, prayer, and reflective journaling to cope with challenging ethical situations. It can be in a person; it can be in society and in institutions also. Employees like to connect with their equals and ask for their advice to feel good while performing their work. They also seek information from their peers especially when their supervisors do not help them enough (Sarmiento & Fermin, 2021). Teachers use various methods to tackle moral problems when they arise. To handle stress, teachers use reflective thinking as well as talking to their coworkers and other social contacts. (Dela Cruz and Reyes, 2020). When the rules are unclear, teachers frequently converse about their own "moral reasoning" to ensure what they are doing is correct.

Schaap and de Bruijn (2024) underscore the vital role of professional learning communities globally in enhancing teachers' collaborative, collective, and generative capacity to overcome challenges in their practice. Having discussions with each other will help the teachers in following the professional standards according to the ethical cases. Sarmiento and Fermin (2021) note that teachers instill empathy-based solutions in making decisions when handling endorsement, discipline, and grading ambiguities. According to the authors, taking both rules and empathy into account is a mechanism adopted by teachers to arrive at a decision in an ethically uncertain situation. They usually make decisions based on past cases (in solving similar cases rather than following rules). Also, professional learning communities (PLCs) and other collaborative structures provide a supportive environment where educators can talk about professional and ethical issues and develop collective responses to those issues (Unkong, 2023).

### **Moral Reasoning and Kohlberg's Theory in Education**

The moral decision-making of teachers can be analyzed through Kohlberg. It offers stages of moral development. Kohlberg (1981) theorized that people progress through stages of moral reasoning from one concerned with obedience and punishment to one reflecting universal ethical principle. The concept has also been employed in education, assessing how teachers justify their choices in terms of fairness, punishment, and the welfare of learner. The theory has been applied to education settings for purpose of assessing how teachers justify decisions

around fairness, discipline, and student wellbeing. This means that Kohlberg's (1981) conception is a basic framework about how people think about moral issue. The moral growth of teachers can be split up into three phases. There are two stages in each of these levels. The six stages display how teachers justify their choices when confronted with a moral dilemma. Conventional-level teachers usually comply with norms and try to gain social acceptability. In contrast, teachers operating at the postconventional continuation distills universal moral ideals first, even if the homonymous institutions state otherwise. Many educational research in ASEAN uses the approach of Kohlberg. According to a recent study, opportunities for guided moral reflection and taking responsibility significantly enhance teachers' ethical decision-making and help them move from rule-based reasoning to principled ethical reasoning (Tello, 2025).

In 1984, one of the most prominent theories for teachers' ethical decision-making was proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg. He organized moral development into six stages. His phases of moral development propose a succession of steps that all people undergo, starting at obedience and punishment orientated and ending at ideals of universal justice. Moreover, Rest (1986) Four-Component Model (FCM) of ethical decision-making entails the stages of ethical sensitivity, judgement, motivation, and action. As noted by Neves (2025), teachers with impressive abilities in resolving ethical dilemmas are known for their moral sensitivity and judgment to ensure that their actions do not contradict professional ethics.

According to Singapore, teachers in Southeast Asia with higher levels of moral reasoning (conventional and post-conventional) are more likely to act in a way that is good for students rather than comply with the rules. Using Kohlberg's model, Filipino teachers moral reasoning levels. He found out that most of them operated at the conventional stage, following the school rules or community standards rather than abstract ethical ideas. Tello (2025) conducted research on some Singaporean teachers and found that these teachers with a well-developed sense of moral reasoning (conventional and post-conventional stages) tend to choose student-centered options and not stick rigidly to norms. evaluated the levels of ethical reasoning of Filipino teachers using Kohlberg's framework. He discovered that most of them were operating at the conventional level or were obeying the school rules or community norms and not based on a moral concept. Values education in the Philippines is continually informed and shaped by values education theory. Santos (2021) studied the moral reasoning level of Filipino teachers using Kohlberg theory. According to Santos, most of the Pinoy teachers operate on the conventional level. They use policies and laws to justify their actions. Most often, their behavior is influenced by this rather than a universal principle.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development is influential in the Philippines regarding values education and teacher training. According to Ocampo (2018), the inclusion of moral dilemmas and ethical discussions in the Junior High School curriculum gives us the opportunity to engage in reflection which develops improvement of moral reasoning both for students and teachers. This means that teachers of all subjects must teach ethics to ensure moral and civic development. Through Kohlberg's stages of moral development, teachers in a public junior high school can help students develop critical thinking, moral values, and principled decision making.

### **Descriptive Qualitative Studies in Ethics and Education**

Existing research supports the chosen method well. Subjective experiences and complex phenomena such as ethics lend themselves well to descriptive qualitative research. Bautista, for example, found "moral fatigue," "faith as anchor," and "values dissonance" as the common themes anent ethical dilemmas of Catholic school teachers in the Philippines (2021). Creswell and Poth (2018) note that this qualitative methodology allows researchers to learn the meanings and patterns that are inherent in the lived experiences of participants without forcing them into current ideas. According to the research design, the descriptive qualitative design can clarify how deep and complicated the real-life experience teaching. People want to know how research was conducted in the past and how we came to know whatever we know. (Creswell and Poth 2018) Bautista (2021) and Lao and Diaz (2019) have successfully adapted it in their study on ethics education in the Philippines. They discovered many rich, themed stories that highlight ethical conflicts, how to deal with them, and professional identity. This design not only helps us understand the choices teachers make, but it also helps us see how they make meaning of those choices in the Filipino social and cultural setting of schools. This includes what they feel, fear, value and believe.

Bautista (2021) utilized a descriptive qualitative approach to look at the ethical problems that Catholic school teachers in the Philippines experience. She found themes including “moral fatigue,” “faith as anchor,” and “values dissonance” to look at the ethical problems that Catholic school teachers in the Philippines experience. She found themes including “moral fatigue,” “faith as anchor,” and “values Lao and Diaz (2019) also employed qualitative thematic analysis to look at the moral problems that ESP teachers face, giving us a better understanding of both their personal problems and the pressures they face at work.

## Synthesis

Research on the ethical decision-making and professional ethics in education shows that teachers at a Public Junior High School often have ethical dilemmas in which they must choose between institutional obligations, professional ethics and the interest of diverse groups of students in a complex classroom setting. When teachers reflect on what is fair and just, student welfare and culturally responsive practices in their decision making they consider their moral principles and professional norms (Campbell, 2019; Ethics in Education research website). The professional behavior of teachers, instructed by ethical frameworks like codes of conduct and virtue ethics, helps maintain public trust, positive classroom atmosphere, and equal learning opportunities (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016; Shapira Lishchinsky, 2020). As explained by Banks (2023); Ladson Billings (2021); Gay (2018), multicultural and inclusive pedagogies emphasize the ethical responsibility of teachers to hardly recognize and respect students’ diversity while upholding integrity and fairness. It suggests that culturally responsive practices enhance ethical decision making and equity in schools. In addition, professional development in ethics education assists teachers in their abilities to incorporate ethical reflection into their practice, allowing for actions that are morally sensitive and principled and that reflect individual and collective needs in the school community (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016; Ethical dilemmas literature). Effective ethical decision making is a progressive process. According to the existing literature, it is not just compliance with rules but a reflective process that leads to education that is inclusive, equitable, and of quality. Moreover, they must be consistent with other professional and societal expectations.

## Organization of the Study

Outline in first chapter focused on the background of the study, the purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical lens, importance of the study, delimitation and limitation, review of the related literature, and its significance to the relevant groups and the community at large. Stated were the three key research questions, which directed the interview process during data collection. The theory utilized as the lens of the study was given in depth together with related local and international research in the review of connected literature. The theory utilized as the lens of the study was given in depth together with related local and international research in the review of connected literature.

Enclosed in the second chapter was an outline of the methods guiding this work. Its analyses, the way of data collecting, the qualitative research method employing a descriptive design, the study subjects, the data sources were all richly described. This chapter also clarified how the study satisfied the criteria established for trustworthiness of a quality research study, the role of the researcher, and the ethical issues that were maintained all during the research process.

The findings of the study were disclosed in the third chapter. As essential in evaluating the influence of the phenomenon, this study offered a thorough comprehension of the findings. Research participant confidentiality was kept to the highest degree, particularly during the presentation of the results.

The fourth chapter presented the findings of the investigation as understood and concluded by the researcher. This section revealed my observations on the relevance and relationship of the outcomes of my study to previously done studies as well as fresh insights I uncovered from the outcomes.

## METHODOLOGY

Presented in this chapter are the research design, research locale, research participants, data sources, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study, validity of instruments, role of the researcher, and ethical

considerations followed in the entire conduct of this study.

## Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method to navigate the experiences and insights of Junior High School teachers from the Davao City Division on the ethical dilemmas that they have encountered. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research understands how people or groups understand a social or human problem. It led to a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences and the meaning made of their actions and decisions. Qualitative approaches were effective in exploring social issues that are complex due to the depth and richness of data it produced through the intensive engagement of participants (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

In the study, the researchers used qualitative research because it helps you to understand intricate phenomena and helps in getting in-depth information about how people feel. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that qualitative research was the best method for studying complex social phenomena because it allows researchers to see how people experience their environment. Through the qualitative approach, of this research, it gave us a comprehensive picture of how Junior High School teachers deal with ethical dilemmas in the field. Miles, and Huberman (1994) proposed the use pseudonyms and code during data collection and analysis to protect participants' privacy.

Specifically, descriptive qualitative research is defined as the method to use when the purpose is to give a complete account of a situation, phenomenon, or phenomenon that has been experienced by individuals or groups in its natural setting (Sandelowski, 2000). According to Sandelowski (2000), descriptive qualitative research aimed to provide a comprehensive picture of certain events experienced by individuals using everyday language. The aim was not to make the phenomenon more abstract or to hypothesis about it. Instead, the goal was to effectively record and expressed what respondents experienced and interpreted. The area of study helped to get the responses that served the objective of the study which was to find out how Junior High School teachers in the DepEd Davao City Division dealt with moral issues in actual classroom situations, particularly how they dealt with moral dilemmas and how these dilemmas influenced the formation of values in their students.

## Research Participants

This study involved a total of 17 Junior High School teachers from three public secondary schools in Davao City Division. Seven teachers from School A were in a focus group discussion (FGD), and five teachers from School B and five teachers from School C were in individual in-depth interviews (IDI). Creswell (2007) and Morse (1994) both said that there should have been at least six people in a qualitative study to make sure the data was complete and rich. Creswell said there should have been five to twenty-five people. The study used purposive sampling to identify people who possessed expertise and familiarity with the pertinent subject (Bernard, 2002). To improve participant identification, snowball sampling was employed, allowing initial participants to suggest coworkers who also satisfied the inclusion criteria. To be qualified, participants had to be Junior High School teachers in the Davao City Division of the Department of Education and had at least three years of experience. They also had to have dealt with ethical dilemmas or tough decisions in their jobs. In this study, ethical dilemmas were circumstances where teachers had to choose between principles, regulations, or obligations that were at odds with each other. This includes dealing with situations of bullying, cheating, or bad behavior by students; dealing with the contradiction between following school rules and being kind to students; finding a balance between being fair when grading and dealing with pressure from parents, administrators, or coworkers; and figuring out how to deal with touchy subjects like partiality, how to share resources, or keeping student information private.

Public Junior High School teachers who wanted to take part in the FGD or IDI had to agree to do so and gave their informed consent. Some teachers were not included because they were on leave or not actively teaching during data collection. Also, some teachers did not want to or could not give informed consent, and some teachers had less than three years of teaching experience, which meant they might not have had enough exposure to difficult ethical issues in the profession. The chosen participants Junior High School teachers were not regarded as vulnerable groups according to ethical research guidelines, as they were professionals capable of giving informed permission. However, because the study included talking about sensitive experiences relating to ethical

concerns, ethical precautions were put in place, such as; making sure that people could choose to participate and leave at any time without any consequences; keeping people's identities secret by giving them fake names and taking out identifying information from transcripts and reports; ensuring secrecy by safely preserving all data and restricting access solely to the researcher and advisor; giving participants clear information about the study's objective, scope, and use of data before getting their formal consent; and letting people avoid questions they did not want to answer. The goal of these precautions was to preserve the privacy, dignity, and health of all participants.

### **Data Sources**

The researchers collected the primary data through in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussions (FGD) with the selected Junior High School teachers. The open-ended questions guided the interviews and discussions of the researcher. Teachers across various topic areas were asked these questions to find their ethical decision-making experiences. The interview guide was included in the appendices with authentication from the experts of the subject. To capture the participants' mindsets during the interviews, the reasoning and personal views of the participants were examined so that this research could study how the Junior High School teachers in question cope with moral dilemmas and make decisions. This allowed them to come up with patterns of shared view, disagreement and shared values that would not have come up in interviews. The combination of IDIs, FGDs and field notes sought to gain holistic and detailed insight into Junior High School Teachers' ethical decision-making in their day-to-day work.

### **Data Collection**

To gather data on the ethical decision-making dilemmas of the Junior High School teachers, the researcher sought first the approval from the Dean of the Graduate School of the University of the Immaculate Conception (UIC). Then, it was submitted to the UIC Research Ethics Committee (UIC-REC), which granted clearance before the data gathering. Subsequently, the Dean gave an endorsement letter to the researcher to proceed with necessary coordination and permits. The Schools Division Superintendent and the heads of three Public Secondary Schools in Davao City Division took consent to conduct interviews and FGDs.

Before gathering data, the researcher acquired informed consent from the participants who were purposely selected after conducting an orientation to explain the aim, importance, procedure, and ethical safeguards. Participants signed an Informed Consent Form (ICF) that their participation was voluntary in which they may withdraw anytime. All interview in FGD responses were recorded using an Android phone. Moreover, all responses were transcribed verbatim and translated into the English language.

Interviews and FGDs were mainly done in person to build rapport and get detailed narratives. If the interviews became uncomfortable for the participants most especially during discussions of difficult ethical issues, the interview would stop to give them a break or completely end the session. Also, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to participants in order to maintain anonymity. The researcher and advisor were the only persons who had access to the raw data while all recording and transcripts were kept in a digital folder which was password protected for five years before permanent deletion in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Finally, transcribed data underwent qualitative data analysis with appropriate procedures for interviews and FGDs.

### **Data Analysis**

For this research, a qualitative descriptive research design was chosen that attempted to study the ethical decision making of Junior High School teachers of Davao City Division. Creswell (2014) performed a systematic analysis to do. This involved arranging, coding, classifying, and drawing meaning from qualitative data to identify important patterns and repeating ideas. The interviews (IDI) and focus group discussions (FGD) audio recordings along with the field notes, which are the primary data sources, were systematically organized and transcribed verbatim for the purpose of verification.

Through the method created by Creswell, I commenced the first coding of the transcript and field note by reading

through it and underlining the significant comments, thoughts, and insight on how subjects make ethical choices. Here, we were on the look-out for any terms, issues, ways of thinking, contextual information, etc., showing how teachers handle ethical issues in their work. Subsequently, the codes were grouped and from those groups, larger themes emerged that illuminated the teachers' common experiences, the ways they made decisions, and the guiding beliefs influencing their moral judgement.

Thematic analysis involved gathering, coding together, identifying together, producing together, bringing together and similar ideas to reveal latent structures of meaning and provide a coherent narrative to illustrate how ethical choices were acted out in the educational milieu. Through Kohlberg's (1971) Theory of Moral Development, we took this analysis, that is a way of thinking through people development or at least their moral thought development. The research focused on how junior high school teachers measure their ethical decision making by comparing their answers to those of Kohlberg's mind to find the level of their ethical decision making at the Workplace.

After I did the analysis, I wrote up the discussion including the themes. Teachers have their own ideas about ethics, and they put some of them into practice in the classroom. It revealed a full and complete picture of the ethical decision-making of Junior High School teachers in Davao City.

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

Many qualitative researchers concluded that trustworthiness is an important criterion (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004) This consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The criteria noted here helped ensure the quality and credibility of qualitative research.

**Credibility.** To achieve credibility and trustworthiness in this descriptive qualitative research, I used multiple sources of data that enable me to check its accuracy. Member checking was one important way. In the process, the participants were presented with the preliminary conclusions to evaluate and comment on or to confirm whether the interpretations did represent their experiences of making ethical decisions. The data became more realistic with the feedback of the participants.

Triangulation was also used in the form of multiple data sources and methods. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and field notes were included. This technique assisted in cross validating the material, discovering replication patterns as well as reducing the chances of bias being introduced by the researcher. The field notes were an important source of supporting data as they document non-verbal clues, the context, and researchers' personal thoughts. The comprehension of spoken replies was easier and the analysis more in-depth and accurate.

I also consulted with my colleagues and other experts on values education and qualitative research for peer debriefing. Input code, theme development, and feedback between the dialogues allow for a more objective and balanced realization of the results. The process undertaken in the study contained an audit trail documenting decisions made on methods, data management, analysis, etc. It ensured clarity, in terms of the study steps, so that other people can follow and add more credibility to the research.

To help make the information more useful and to help the reader better understand the real lives of the participants, I provided thick descriptions, or detailed stories that were rich in context, which showed the difficulties teachers experienced when making ethical decisions. I became aware of my own beliefs and potential biases throughout the project, I employed reflexivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018) in the study. My study was grounded, and I kept asking how the voices and views of those in the cohort were considered while making sense of the data that I was producing.

**Transferability.** I included detailed contextual descriptions regarding the participants, their educational contexts, and the ethical issues they faced to ensure transferability. Teachers, and ultimately researchers, were able to assess whether the results might apply to similar settings. As per Merriam (2009), rich descriptions allow your readers to form an informed opinion concerning the applicability of the findings in other settings.

The study presents implications that may have been significant for the ESP (Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao)

teachers from other schools or context because of the specific nuances of ethical decision-making in any classroom. Yin (2011) states that when qualitative researchers offer specific details about where and under what circumstances the study was conducted, qualitative findings become more transferable to other settings and contexts.

**Dependability.** The finding of the study contains implications which could be relevant for any other ESP teacher in other school or context which captures the nuances in ethical decision-making in any classroom. According to Yin (2011), if qualitative researchers furnish specific information about the context and circumstances under which a study was conducted, qualitative findings become easier to transfer to other settings and contexts.

I undertook systematic peer debriefing with colleagues who had some experience which reviewed the coding, themes, and views for consistency in gathering and analyzing my data. During the research study, I also documented each choice and change, as well as every thought. To do this in subsequent research, the research indicated a systematic approach, like that of Nowell et al. (2017); who identified the importance of transparency in science in the definition of reliability.

**Confirmability.** To avoid researcher bias, I made sure that the conclusions followed from what the participants stated or produced. To provide for external auditors, I have maintained documentation of all the research activities during the data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

According to Shenton, reflexive journaling allowed me to note down my thoughts, presumptions, and any bias throughout the research process. Transcribing the interview tapes allowed me to provide the participants with the transcripts and ask them to check the truthfulness of their answers. This ensures the data's authenticity. The inherent nature of the current approach matched with Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) recommendation of methodological openness aimed at creating confirmability.

Confirmability is assured, as Morse et al. (2002) noted, that the findings are the results of the actual data. This ensures that the data fit the participants' experience which helped to increase the validity of the case study. Through audit trails and participants validating their contributions, this research affirms that the findings are trustworthy, unbiased, and holds lived experience.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In this qualitative study about Junior High School teacher's ethical decisions, the researcher played several important roles to ensure that the research will be suitably and ethically conducted. I did a lot like interviewer, transcriber, translator, typist analyst and interpreter of results.

I arranged and oversaw the in-depth interviews as well as the focus group discussions with selected Junior High School teachers which faced ethical issues in their work as interviewer. I designed open-ended questions that would enable teachers to elaborate on their thoughts, feelings, and decision-making in moral dilemmas. At the interview and talk, the people got to say just what came to their minds exactly and were quite honest about it. The setting was peaceful and polite and certainly non-threatening. As the facilitator of the FGDs, I led conversations with group members to give them an opportunity to share their stories, positive experiences, common problems, and strategies by which they address the problems they face in their careers. I took care to keep off-topic discussions to a minimum and gathered intelligence that is very useful.

Once I finished the data collection phase, I prepared and transcribed the content of all the interviews and FGDs from recording devices. One important step in the data collection for the qualitative research was data authenticity and verifiability. In instances where I could not understand the native tongue, I often played translator. While translating their words I ensured that what they have meant was not altered in any way.

I observed the participating setting as much as I could to develop a greater understanding of the school's culture and other possible factors of teachers' ethical decisions. The observations and reflections were recorded in field notes. Later in the data analysis procedure, they served as extra data source you could use.

As a data analyst, I did theme analysis based on the transcripts and field notes in detail. We identified the repeating patterns and clustered similar codes together for our better understanding. Then, the overarching themes were

developed to represent the participants' main ethical issues and decision-making strategies. According to our study, we relied on Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (1971) to unveil the stages of moral development that originated from the experiences of the teachers.

In addition, I performed the research to make it most ethical. I Protected Participants rights, privacy, and confidentiality as an ethical guardian. Before they could participate, they had to provide informed consent. After the investigation, the information remained safely private. I always thought about ethics and culture when I was in communication.

I learned that the researcher is an instrument in qualitative research. The researcher had to be reflexive, which means that the researcher had to be self-aware, and think about how their views, assumptions, and position may affect the entire study process. In the interest of maintaining the validity of the study then I would try to balance my biases out as much as possible.

As the researcher, my responsibility involved all the steps in the study, including the arrangement of data collection, the analysis, and ethical issues. Every stakeholder's participation is crucial for achieving a proper relevant and valid investigation of ethical decision making in Junior High School classrooms.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Making ethical decisions is the focus of the research "Navigating the Dilemma of Making Ethical Decisions: A Descriptive Qualitative Study". The researcher committed was evident from the methodology spirit. The highest ethical standards were utilized in the research. Our institution meticulously adhered to the guidelines set by the University of the Immaculate Conception Research Ethics Committee (UIC-REC) which supervises all institutional research. Accordingly, the protocol was sent for review and approval. Participants had to give their consent for data collection process to begin. Furthermore, a Protocol Code was also provided for this purpose. The Research Ethics Committee guided us in implementing stringent measures to ensure the safety, privacy, and rights of everyone participating. Before the study began, the participants had to provide informed consent, which allowed audio recording. Similarly, they were told that they must agree willingly and can refuse at any time without any penalty.

The psychologist conducting a detailed and ethical study was a Master of Arts in Values Education student with teaching experience requirements. The researcher had the right academic qualifications and professional experience. The thesis adviser and panel members are responsible for the research process and honest in doing everything to make the parties accountable. The UIC Library, university equipment, online databases, etc., were also made available to the researcher. This was extremely helpful in conducting the research study. The research aims to provide valuable insights by following ethical protocols, having academic qualifications, and an institution's backing, always avoiding disrespect and harm to the participants.

## **RESULTS**

Presented in this chapter are the themes generated from the analysis of the responses of the participants. The findings are presented in descriptive and tabular manner.

### **Profile of the Participants**

Provided in Table 1.1 is the demographic profile of the research participants. As shown, these participants are teachers from public junior high schools in Davao City Division. There are 10 participants participated in the IDI, while 7<sup>th</sup> participants joined in FGD. There were 8 male and 9 female participants. FGD 4 had the longest teaching experience in DepEd with 37 years, while IDI 5 had the least with only 3 years in service. They were all given the code IDI.

### **Perceptions of Participants on Ethical Decision-Making**

Presented in Table 1.2 are the essential themes and core ideas that generated from the participants responses. Four essential themes generated: making ethical decisions means doing the right thing, adherence to ethical standards, professional and personal integrity and navigating relationships.

Table 1.1 Profile of the Participants

Participant's Code	Sex	Years of Teaching in Deped
IDI 1	Male	6
IDI 2	Female	4
IDI 3	Male	8
IDI 4	Male	10
IDI 5	F	3
IDI 6	F	30
IDI 7	M	15
IDI 8	M	25
IDI 9	M	15
IDI 10	F	30
FGD 1	F	30
FGD 2	M	28
FGD 3	M	8
FGD 4	F	37
FGD 5	F	30
FGD 6	F	30
FGD 7	F	27

Table 1.2 Perceptions of Participants on Ethical Decision-Making

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Making ethical decisions means doing the right thing.	Doing the right thing, fairness, and justice Following conscience and honesty Treating others with respect
Adherence to Ethical Standards	Honesty, justice, compassion, respect, and accountability Faith and biblical principles Professional code of ethics DepEd fundamental values
Professional and Personal Integrity	Role modeling for students is important in both personal and professional life. Giving you peace
Navigating Relationships	Not changing grades Coping with pressure from parents Staying fair even when things get tough

**Making ethical decisions means doing the right thing.** This theme generated from the categories of moral integrity and professional responsibilities. For the participants who took part, making ethical decisions involves doing the right thing, even when it is hard. Teachers said that being ethical means being fair, honest, and following your conscience while also reconciling your personal values with your professional duties. They also

saw it to demonstrate respect for others and keep their integrity at work and in life. Additionally, they mentioned that it is often difficult to be courageous and do the right thing even when it conflicts with your self-interest.

One teacher said:

In my opinion, ethics always involve doing the right thing. **(IDI 4)**

Another participant stated that making ethical decisions is linked to integrity and conscience:

I was guided by my conscience and integrity in choosing a course that is right and moral. **(IDI 2)**

Meanwhile, one of the participants shared her views concerning justice:

To me, ethical decision-making is when you choose what is right and fair, especially when it pertains to the future of your students. **(FGD 2)**

Such responses represent that teacher view ethical decision-making as dedication to honesty and fairness. It shows that teachers feel responsible and accountable as role models. They know their actions have an impact on the way students view morality and their ethical development. They believe honesty and fairness in the everyday make their students trust them more. They do it not only for meeting the ethical standards but also to motivate their students to do the same in their lives.

**Adherence to Ethical Standards.** The value-based principles and ethical foundations were the principles made by the participants. The participants said that honesty, fairness, responsibility, compassion, and respect are the basis of ethical decision-making. They also mentioned that their internal system, where values like faith, biblical principles, and institutional values (for example, those set by DepEd), serve as their code of ethics. They emphasized that being an ethical compass, in the time of dilemma, allows them to make choices that they do not know will be right. These policies ensure that the teachers' decisions are impartial and made in the best interest by advertising these welfare policies continuously. Some of them also said that they are going through their guiding beliefs, and it enables them to know if their behavior is beneficial or harmful to others. As a result, they think that following their personal code of ethics will help them make proper decisions and defend the teaching profession.

One participant tied values to choices:

My principles, including honesty, justice, compassion, respect, and accountability, guide me. **(IDI 5)**

Another participant in the IDI connected faith to work ethics:

I use the biblical principles and our professional code of ethics that teachers must follow to decide what is right. **(IDI 7)**

The FGD added that:

Honesty and integrity are part of our values that we regularly reinforce. Students have us set an example for them, which contributes to fair decision making. **(FGD 1)**

These answers indicate that the educators' perception of making ethical decisions is that it is an active concern for being grounded in fairness and truthfulness. It shows that teachers perceive themselves as role models who are responsible and accountable. They know that their choice of actions and behaviors affect how students perceive and behave with ethical standards. Teachers know that modeling honesty and fairness in daily interactions with others motivates students' similar behaviors both in and outside of the learning environment. They feel that practicing such values would establish a climate of trust, respect, and integrity among learners.

**Professional and Personal Integrity.** This was revealed by the professionalism and mentoring of the category. Teachers indicated that ethical decision-making was very crucial since their decisions influenced not only their lives but also the development of their students. It was highlighted that ethical standards must be followed since

they are necessary for being a role model and for gaining trust, credibility, and integrity in the profession. It was noted that professionalism is reflected in all the actions that a teacher chooses whether taken within or outside the work environment. Participants stated that ethical behavior by teachers improves the learning experience because students feel that they are treated with respect and dignity. They also said that honesty and fairness helped strengthen partners among colleagues, parents, and the community. Eventually, they believe that ethical decision-making is not only a professional responsibility but also a continuous journey that influences teachers' character and style of instruction.

One teacher said:

It is a very important part of the job because as a teacher, I am likened to a role model, and so what I do ought to reflect the correct picture. **(IDI 6)**

Another captured how ethics were judgement-free:

For me, it is essential because when you decide ethically, you do not carry any guilt, you know you did what is right for your students. **(IDI 3)**

One of the participants in the FGD discussed the importance of general ethicality:

Ethical decision plays a vital role for me both in work and life. Being at work, I must first be a role model to them (my students) because they look up to you. **(FGD 1)**

That implies that among the participants who gave interviews, they regard ethical decision-making as an integral part of teaching, both in terms of providing a guide to their behavior and for their career development. They consider that engaging in ethical practices increases their credibility and establishes trust between students, parents, and other school personnel.

**Navigating Relationships.** Thus, the theme generated of teachers facing dilemmas of virtue and ethical dilemmas in actual teaching. Teachers talked about situations in their daily lives where the test of their virtuous nature came to their minds the time when they were asked to alter their grades, to withstand parental pressure, and when they had to make tough decisions that put their morals and their profession in direct contradiction. They argued that such experiences taught them the value of staying united despite the predicament or opposition that might come following their choice of upholding their values. Both teachers and administrators came to know that moral quandaries usually put a spotlight on the true nature of any individual and reveal their level of dedication to what is right. A few participants remarked that these moments of residency helped them to arrive at better decisions in the future. In summary, these were moral but also vocational opportunities to the professionals.

Participant 1 spoke of the situation:

There has been a period when a parent asked me to pass their child if I could. I stood my ground because it would be unfair to other students. **(IDI 1)**

Participant 8 shared his feelings:

I was put on trial to change the grade of a student, but I told my side of the story, and I stood for fairness. **(IDI 8)**

Participant 4 of the FGD said that such incidents normally take place:

At times, parents would go on, asking for their will to prevail; nevertheless, teachers need to fight to uphold fairness even when it means upsetting them. **(FGD 4)**

These illustrations reflect that teachers are being tested in genuine situations where their professionalism may be challenged. Participants responded that it requires bravery, self-control, and a strong sense of responsibility to

stay honest in the face of difficulties. They also said that the practice of getting advice from mentors/coworkers was beneficial in solving ethical dilemmas prudently. Lastly, these experiences made teachers remember that ethical decision-making is a lifelong process that helps strengthen a person's character and commitment to serving with honesty and integrity.

### Strategies Employed by the Participants in Ethical Decision-Making

Table 2 shows the essential themes and the core ideas on which participants' answers were analyzed. Two essential themes, the mindful and values-driven process and reflective and critical thinking.

Table 2 Strategies Employed by the Participants in Ethical Decision-Making

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Mindful and Values-Driven Process	Getting information, thinking over the results Praying and looking for advice from moral standards Personal values  Family background Mentors, policies, religion, and professional ethics
Reflective and Critical Thinking	Honesty, justice, and the golden rule The professional code of ethics, school standards Biblical principles, and gut feeling  Dealing with cheating fairly Holding parent-teacher conferences Standing up to bullying, and making sure Promotions are fair

**Mindful and Values-Driven Process.** The reflected decision-making process was the primary theme that generated from the categories about reflection and guidance. The participants explained that they usually stop to think and reflect on their values and principles, as well as faith, when faced with an ethical dilemma. They highlighted the importance of assessing the available information, considering the consequences, and making fair and ethical judgments. It was mentioned that being mindful helped them slow down and think of how to act in response to an ethical dilemma instead of reacting to it immediately. Teaching staff equally emphasized the importance of seeking advice from colleagues or mentors to have a wide range of viewpoints to consider before deciding. This process of thinking about things and talking to others helps them make sure that their decisions are in line with both their personal and professional morals. In the end, they think that being attentive and values-driven makes them more morally sure of themselves and helps them make better judgments as teachers.

One participant said:

So, when faced with an ethical dilemma I typically follow a structured approach to ensure to make a well-reasoned decision. **(IDI 1)**

Another participant stated that prayer and introspection were important steps:

As a theologian... whenever I have doubts, I wake up at 4am and pray the holy hour. I listen to hymns and reflect. **(IDI 3)**

Meanwhile, one of the participants in the FGD added:

Learn to listen. **(FGD 4)**

These answers show that a teacher does not make decisions at first sight; a teacher thinks seriously and looks for both a logical and a spiritual source of direction before making a choice. They are aware of fact that to make ethical decisions one has to devote time and patience and look at a situation from different angles and viewpoints. The abductees said that what gives them the opportunity to think about it, to weigh the causes and effects, and to come to the right and fair decision is to devote time to it. They also said that prayer and meditation on their spirituality often give them strength and see things clearly when they have hesitation in mind. In the end, the

teacher’s way of making decisions ultimately shows that his/her faith principle is the foundation of their activity, where reason is combined with faith.

**Reflective and Critical Thinking.** The theme was generated from the categories of differing sources of ethical influence. Educators reported that they are guided by a blend of their personal beliefs, upbringing, school regulations, and religious convictions, all of which shape their choices in terms of ethics. Mentors and coworkers also help them make ethical decisions. They stated that their upbringing gave them a strong sense of right and wrong that still guides their work now. Participants also stressed that institutional rules, such as the DepEd Code of Ethics, make it apparent how to be professional and fair. Their faith guides them to be kind, humble, and honest in all situations. In the end, they think that mixing personal, institutional, and spiritual influences helps them make decisions that are fair and ethically just when they teach.

One teacher responded:

My decision is influenced by a combination of factors including my personal values, policies, mentors, religions, and culture. **(IDI 1)**

Another thing that stood out was the influence of family and religion:

So, the influences, the persons, or the people are my parents. Of course, they are the one who raised me. My co-teachers and religious leaders. **(IDI 2)**

The FGD brought out the importance of faith and institutional norms:

And as a mentor, we must be a model also. And religion also helps. **(FGD 4)**

This personal evidence shows that teachers' decisions are never in a vacuum due to internal and external things that assist to make things fair and accountable. Teachers understand that their beliefs and upbringing morally influence how they view and deal with moral dilemmas. While at the same time, external forces, such as institutional rules, community expectations, and professional ethics, enable them to be objective and consistent. Participants mentioned that this equilibrium between their own beliefs and the institution rule makes them feel more responsible. Ultimately, students perceived making ethical dilemmas as a group decision fueled by conscience, rules, and shared values in the school community.

### Challenges Encountered by the Participants in Ethical Decision-Making

Table 3 presents the essential themes and core ideas that came out from participants' responses. Three essential themes generated: conflicting values and expectation, moral judgement, and difficulty in dealing with ethical issues.

Table 3 Challenges Encountered by the Participants in Ethical Decision-Making

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Conflicting Values and Expectation	<p>Students have different interests and values, and they may feel pressure from their peers, authority figures, parents, and co-workers.</p> <p>They may also feel pressure from authority figures, parents, and co-workers.</p> <p>There may not be clear regulations, or they may not be ready for circumstances, working with different kinds of students.</p> <p>The shift from private to public education Discrepancies between institutional regulations and individual conscience.</p>

Moral Judgement	Being honest and standing up for your beliefs Being polite when you share your thoughts Communicating openly  Combining discipline with kindness Keeping true to your values
Difficulty in Dealing with Ethical Issues	Not passing unqualified students even when they are under pressure.  Having problems with parents, coworkers, and administrators.  Being misunderstood or moved Getting criticism from the community

**Conflicting Values and Expectation.** This theme was generated from the categories from challenges and the restrictions in ethical practice. Teachers said that a lot of their problems originate from pressure from parents, authority figures, and co-workers, as well as peer pressure at school. Others said that it can be hard to deal with the diverse values and interests of pupils, especially when the rules are not clear, or things do not go as planned. They said that these kinds of events usually are going to test their patience, fairness, and honesty. Responses claimed that they resort to intelligence and emotional strength for making fair and objective decisions but not rushed and impulsive ones. Responses noted that institutional barriers, including unclear policies and the lack of support from the administrators, can contribute to the difficulties in ethical decision-making. Regardless, they make it a goal not to have a bias but to put the best interest of the students first. In the end, they believe that these challenges will act as platforms for moral courage and opportunities for self-learning about the moral identity of a teacher.

One teacher talked about how hard it was to deal with students who had different values:

In my experience, several factors make ethical decision-making difficult. One of the significant challenges is the presence of the conflict of the values or interests of the students. **(IDI 1)**

Another stressed peer pressure in the educational system:

My answer to this is peer pressure here in DepEd. I have been approached by traditionalist people. It is always difficult. If you are new, you will really be tested. **(IDI 2)**

An FGD participant backed this up by talking about the pressure from authority:

There are instances *na* pressured *ka sa* admin, pressured *ka sa* co-teachers, pressured *ka sa* parents. *Kaya minsan di ka makapag-decide* easily. **(FGD 4)**

There are instances in which you feel pressured by the admin, pressured by your co-teachers, and pressured by the parents. That is why sometimes it is hard to make a decision easily.

Through descriptions like these, the teachers imply that multiple external pressures could hinder them from making ethics-centered decisions. Teachers may also be pressured by other people's expectations, such as those of students' parents, fellow teachers, school administrators, and even other members of the community. This can lead them to think that they are behaving unfairly or dishonestly. Participants reported more feelings of emotional exhaustion when their ethical consciousness was challenged by doubts about their ethical standards. They stressed their key tenets needed for getting back on track. According to the teachers, the most surprising finding was that they have a very social profession that is not as isolating as it seems. The participants felt that they could overcome bumps in the road by using the same ethical reasoning they had used during formative years. They concluded that these fundamentals and their resiliency would be enough to keep them on the straight and narrow.

**Moral Judgement.** This aspect was manifested in value dilemmas at the workplace. The teachers sense that these situations appear when their own values come into conflict with the regulations of the institution or the traditions, especially regarding grading, equity, and discipline in the classroom. Disruption between different school systems became an additional issue for contradictions between personal values and expectations of the

organization. The participants reported that in such conflicts, following the policy of their organization versus obeying their conscience remained a dilemma. According to the participants, such situations put human beings to mental stress as they run the risk of facing judgmental opinions and misunderstanding from their management or colleagues. Teachers shared experiences of attempts to deal with them non-aggressively by politely but respectfully informing them of their opinions. Some participants expressed the opinion that honesty and openness were important things in solving value-based workplace disagreement. However, they mentioned that educators should follow their own moral principles even if an organization presses them to conform. This is needed for maintaining trust and honor for the profession.

Participants identified conflicts between their personal value system and school rules:

Some of my values contradict the school grading system. To me, it should always be fair, but the school sometimes has its strict policies. **(IDI 3)**

Another participant talked about how hard it is to move from one place to another:

When I switched from a private to a public school, I was challenged because the system is not the same. My values of fairness and consistency sometimes contradicted with the system. **(IDI 2)**

FGD 5 shared:

There are times where you know what is right, but the school rules are against you. Which causes conflict. **(FGD 5)**

It shows that ethical choice is concerned not just with one's own conscience but the overcoming of institutional limitation. Teachers are aware that their ethical choices need to be mutually consistent with the school's policies and organizational norms. They were of the view that good judgment and diplomacy would be needed to see to it that the necessary balancing takes place, and their action is ethical as well as legal. Participants pointed out the difficulty of following the rules in cases where there is lowly application of some principle due to institutional constraints. Nevertheless, they put a fair and honest effort in attempting to do so. They also stressed the need to talk honestly with schools about rules that may not be ethical. Essentially, they understand ethical decision-making as a process of working out one's personal beliefs and organizational responsibility to meet ethical and organizational standards. Difficulty in Dealing with Ethical Issues. To deal with all the pressure teachers might showcase firmness, keep talking to one another, maintain respect, etc. The theme was generated based on the resulting two categories that were ethical under pressure and having a strong ethical stance in stressful situations. Those interviewed indicated that in relation to the values of others and their own, the participants respect their own views while remaining open to and willing to discuss the views of others.

Some of the participants stop to think for a moment. Others are working hard to pull off the delicate balancing act of worrying more about them than we are with them. What is this weight? We can exert just enough so that there is not more. And it does not escalate. They put a lot of stress on the importance of keeping a cool head and the inevitability of stress management at the core of the whole ethical problem-solving process. Participants mentioned that even during hard times, human beings can solve problems and understand each other by creating an atmosphere of respect and communication. In addition, others' opinions, as they explained, allow them to enrich their own understanding of the issue without losing their values. Therefore, teachers imply that being humble yet positive when sticking to one's opinion cultivates a favorable atmosphere and rapport in the workplace. Ultimately, they consider that coping with stress by respecting each other and being honest turns a challenge into an opportunity to reflect and foster a flourishing school community.

Another teacher said:

When I face pressure from others who may have different ethical positions, I try to keep myself focused on my values first. **(IDI 1)**

One teacher emphasized:

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I will try to be as calm as possible. I will stop, think, and decide. Then I can protect my values but in a respectful way. **(IDI 4)**

FGD 6 shared:

If the student is yelling, they can keep yelling. Next, ask them to calm down and talk to you. We try to find a solution with no conflicts, but we stand our ground. **(FGD 6)**

The testimony statements indicate that strength, patience, and respectfulness are some of the qualities through which one can deal with ethical pressure. Teachers mentioned that inner strength helps them stay balanced when oppose or challenge them. Just like being patient helps the members of the teaching fraternity to think logically and avoid doing or saying anything that would injure others or destroy their good name, similarly Politeness is good for the teachers. They also think that respect encourages open conversation, which can help people understand each other better and solve problems. Participants stressed that having these attributes together helps them be professional while also following their moral values. In the end, they think that strength, patience, and respect are important values that help people make ethical decisions and keep the school community peaceful.

### Insights Shared in Improving Ethical Decision-Making

Table 4 contains the essential themes and the core ideas emanating from participants' answers. Three essential themes that generated are the following: role of personal values, reflective ethical decision making, and being compassionate.

Table 4 Insights Shared in Improving Ethical Decision-Making

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Role of Personal Values	Always do the right thing Make judgments based on your views and principles  Be honest, be patient and ask for help Follow the Code of Ethics.
Reflective Ethical Decision Making	Reflection, reading and writing Praying, training, and talking to coworkers
Being Compassionate	More patience and talking to each other Learning from mistakes Thinking about the past Making better decisions  Create a safe space for open conversation

**Role of Personal Values.** Precisely these events appear to constitute the subject of ethics based on religious and moral values. Members of the group highlighted the importance of always acting correctly, as well as respecting one's principles and beliefs, and being just in one's dealings. They explained that even more eventually, the values of honesty, openness, and the Code of Ethics for professional teachers also teach people how to make ethical choices. Many teachers with a strong religious background have revealed that faith and good moral training guide them in their decision-making process when making tough choices. There are participants who clarified that prayer and reflection enable them to make the right ethical choice even when they face difficulties. Others answered that honor should be maintained at all costs, even when one is facilitated to cheat, when nobody is looking. The educators also explained that following performed values enhances trust as well as credibility inside the school district. Moreover, through their own experiences, they assert that being honest based on faith and ethics rather than on age and physical strength can lead to overall fairness and improved levels of honesty for all.

One teacher shared:

So, do what is right and always choose to do what is right. Treat people equal and give them or treat them the way they deserve. **(IDI 2)**

Another decision-making significantly tied to truth: Be a slave of truth. **(IDI 3)**

The FGD confirmed this with certainty:

I will stand by. Be firm. **(FGD 2)**

These answers reveal that teachers think the greatest method to help students make ethical decisions is to always do the right thing, no matter how hard it is. They think that the best method to teach honesty and moral responsibility is to set a good example. Students are more likely to do the same thing when they witness their teachers being honest and fair. Teachers also said that when words and actions are consistent, it builds kids' trust and respect. Some people said that helping pupils deal with moral issues in real life helps them grasp how important it is to do the right thing, even when it is hard.

**Reflective Ethical Decision Making.** The participants mentioned items such as prayer, meditating, reading the bible, and rich discussions with circles of friends to aid in the decision-making process. Also, the interviewees mentioned how helpful the use of books, podcasts and the bible were soothing and supportive. Through these activities, teachers pause and think over, to verify that their response mode of action is in accordance with ethical and professional principles. Through reflection, they find clarity and reassurance regarding their ethical decision, where their gut feelings can also help guide their decisions. Supportive remarks from friends and eminent individuals give them the right moral confidence to do the right thing. With ongoing practice, one can continuously research and evaluate themselves and identify their strengths and weaknesses and work to improve weaknesses. Ultimately, they serve as a foundation for the teacher's philosophy through their good practices and adherence to the basic values of the profession - honesty, justice, and respect.

IDI 2 participant answered:

I use the techniques of different philosophies that can improve my ethical decision-making. For me, I read books. **(IDI 2)**

IDI 3 shared:

I listen to podcasts, watch videos about mental empowerment and read the holy scriptures. The Bible is an excellent guide. **(IDI 3)**

FGD 5 answered:

Practice with reflections, think, decide again and again. **(FGD 5)**

These insights indicate that ethical decision-making requires a process, a moment because of reflection, learning and spiritual anchor. Through critical rethinking and constant experiencing, teachers create it.

Their wins and losses will allow them to make better moral and empathetic decisions in the future. This ongoing development promotes behavior that is anchored in values even when faced with uncertainty or ethical complexity. Teachers assist students in broadening their sense of ethics by seeking knowledge and spiritual support from time to time. Not only does this help them improve their abilities, but it also shows others how to behave with honesty and intent.

**Being Compassionate.** The capacity building and getting support from institutions. The participants indicated that organizations and institutions could help in making ethical decisions by providing clear guidelines, training, and safe spaces for open discussions. The participants also suggested that it would be helpful for teaching staff to undergo a recall and participate in training. Providing continuous ethical coursework and mentoring to the teachers in schools leads to their development of confidence in handling dilemmas correctly. Clear policy frameworks and open communication channels ensure that misinterpretations are mitigated and that an ethical professional approach to decision-making is followed. The support of supervisors in schools and their application of ethics such as integrity and equity in all situations tend to influence teachers' behavior positively. Ethics committees and seminars cater to the input of teachers on contemporary dilemmas and the best approaches to

deal with them.

One teacher said:

They must offer programs and activities for ethical decision-making. **(IDI 3)**

IDI 4 answered:

With clear policies, training, and a safe environment to voice concerns without fear of punishment, organizations can help teachers make ethical decisions. **(IDI 4)**

FGD 5 shared:

Capacity building. **(FGD 5)**

These accounts demonstrate that personal values do matter a lot, but so do institutional structures for advocating and sustaining moral behavior. Teachers are more likely to make decisions that are in line with their ethical principles and professional standards when schools have clear ethical guidelines and strong leadership. Institutions provide as an ethical compass that helps teachers feel responsible and fair. They also make it so that teachers want to act with integrity in their daily work by making it clear that ethical behavior is important and respected. Even the most well-meaning teachers may find it hard to operate ethically when they are under pressure or do not know what is expected of them. So, to keep an ethical teaching culture going, there needs to be a balance between individual conscience and the structure of the institution.

## DISCUSSION

Presented in this chapter are the discussion and interpretation of the findings supported by pertinent literature. The implications for educational practice, recommendations for future research, and the concluding remarks are also provided.

### Perceptions of Participants on Ethical Decision-Making

This theme describes how participants comprehend, experience, and reflect upon ethical decision-making in their professional lives as teachers and personal lives. Their perceptions were produced through four sub-themes: making ethical decisions means doing the right thing, adherence to ethical standards, professional and personal integrity and navigating relationships. The theme Perceptions of Participants on Ethical Decision-Making along with the sub-themes of doing the right thing, adherence to ethical standards, professional and personal integrity, dealing with relationships presents a match with the conventional and post-conventional stage of Kohlberg. Teachers' insistence that others follow the ethical standards and institutional policies of their profession reflects social expectation-based reasoning. The thinking underlying these behaviors is that ideas and actions ought to be guided by professional expectations. Simultaneously, integrity with moral responsibility suggests a move toward principle-based reasoning i.e., teachers will rely on their internalized values rather than simply following the rules.

*Ethical decision-making.* The study reflected that ethical decision making is a negotiating of morals based on values, institutions, and everyday dilemmas. The findings of this study also support the claim made by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) that teachers ethical decision making involves a moral maze within personal values, professional norms, and institutional expectations. The framework of ethical leadership and decision making developed by Shapiro and Stefkovich proposes that teachers use multiple ethical paradigms of care, justice and professional that cannot be solved through rules alone. It illustrates how moral

reasoning is based both on inner convictions as well as outside pressures. The participants in the current study described their "ability to do the right thing" which is driven by their moral commitments to fairness, compassion, and responsibility. This moral commitment enables them to act ethically even when their cultural norms, school policies, and societal expectations did not align. It highlights the teacher's morality and value, which draws on their professional ethical commitment in the school environment, important to develop ethical behavior and

decision making.

Teacher's perception is a reality of the education system that teachers are moral agents. Their choices are influential in learning environments, the well-being of the students and the wider school environment. Through ethical decision making, teachers can create their own character and carry out values-based education. The experiences shared by the teachers call for ethical training, reflective practice, and supportive school policies to help teachers deal with dilemmas. The school spirit of education embraces integrity, fairness and moral leadership which highlights the fact that education is more than just academics.

*Making ethical decisions means doing the right thing.* This main theme represented the participants' understanding that ethical decision-making would entail doing the right thing. Teachers comprehend that, in their own lives, a short time for reflection allows them to give a calm and rational rather than a hasty response. Besides, they realized that attempts to talk directly with colleagues and supervisors aided in addressing rising problems and contributed to the improvement of the whole unit's ethical competence. They will eventually consider all the sides of the issue and reach a conclusion based on the data collected. Like that, experiences will mold them into more virtuous, considerate, and community-oriented individuals over time.

The results of this study support the findings of Robandi, Supriatna, Nuryani, and Ibrahim (2017) who proposed that moral agency in teachers is at the core of professional ethics and ethical decision-making in education. According to the conceptual framework of the authors, teachers must become moral agents who ought to ethically perform their professional obligations and teach moral values to the students. Moreover, it is stated that moral agency does not only involve the action but also the agent and is multi-dimensional. This view emphasizes that teachers' moral judgment and actions are not merely a product of institutional pressures but rather a reflection of deliberate reasoning regarding ethics. Thus, teachers ought to purposely build up their moral agency by engaging in reflection. As per the manifest content of the participants of the present study, it shows that for the teachers' moral agency is seen as a rallying. It is understood that the teachers should perform their duty not only through the mandates of institutional disciplines but also as a social obligation which means a responsible towards universal moral norms for the sake of the student. At the same time, it also means a social obligation toward the wellness of the school community.

*Adherence to Ethical Standards.* This vital theme states that the choice of a strategy for a principle which eventually ends up at an elite consensus on the better way of implementing the core values. The teachers cited honesty, fairness, responsibility, compassion, and respect as the values that are the basis of professional conduct. They noticed that these standards not only compel them to be self-unconditional but also give away the feeling of being role models. Participants also found that their faith and the values of the organization, such as the core values of the Department of Education (Maka-Diyos, Maka-tao, Makakalikasan, and Makabansa) affect their ethical decision. This means that teachers are behaving ethically by linking their personal belief system with the responsibility to institutional principles.

The resulting theme confirms what Shapiro and Stefkovich (2022) emphasized, that every moral and ethical component of leadership in the educational sector must be embedded in justice, compassion, critique, and professionalism, as supported by They asserted that a teacher ought to make a conscious effort to engage in moral judgment based on honesty, justice, and compassion, specifically when having to make difficult decisions related to children and school policy. Participants' testimonies back this up, as such intellectual procedures are thought to be established by professional standards and a teacher's moral position. It shows that moral reasoning on behalf of a teacher is not mere obedience toward one's superiors but rather actively trying to control a community of respectfulness, honesty, and justice.

*Professional and Personal Integrity.* The participants indicated that making ethical decisions is a very important component of life and work, and they said so under this core theme. The officers mentioned that every action they take will define their conscience more than their integrity and will also affect the progress of the students. Thus, the role model aspect, they mentioned, also means that they will be ethical, which means that they will be fair, honest, and professional in all kinds of situations. In fact, faithfulness and sincerity seem to be important also to students, parents, and co-workers. Consequently, their statements demonstrated the close connection between the ability to be responsible for both teachers and people and to act in an ethical way based on their

own morality and the image of their integrity.

This conclusion is consistent with Shapiro and Stefkovich's (2016) ethics of the profession, which proposes that educational moral and ethical leadership should be based on fairness, compassion, criticism, and professionalism. The authors pointed out that teachers and school supervisors to whom students and school policies are related should apply ethical reasoning when faced with difficult issues. These discussions about the interviewed teachers' experiences, which confirm that they tried to do the right and thoughtful thing in their professional work, support this conclusion. Consequently, teachers' ethical behavior is governed not only by professionalism as its guiding principle but also by their personal values and convictions, similarly to the concept of "the ethics of the profession" proposed by Shapiro and Stefkovich.

*Navigating Relationships.* This is a key concern showing that, each day, teachers encounter applied ethical dilemmas that put their moral principles and judgment regarding their chosen career on the line. The participants indicated that the practical ethical dilemmas that they often face require them to strike the right balance of compassion, fairness, and respect that they always seek to achieve considering pressure or demands from other stakeholders. Every act betrays their business persona, and the moral character of clients indicate their level of professionalism. It trains them to defend the right to do the right thing despite the conditions. As such, they can learn their lesson and being taught how to be morally responsible and sound teachers the right way.

This is consistent with Shapiro and Stefkovich's (2016) argument that what is moral and ethical educational leadership is ultimately a matter of justice, care, critique, and competence. According to them, teachers and administrators must have integrity while taking various decisions who faces dilemmas of students and policies. The responses also endorsed this view. Respondents expressed their desires to act fairly and with care in their practice. This means that the ethical decision-making of teachers is not only based on adherence to ethical prescriptions but also by internalized values and beliefs, supporting Shapiro and Stefkovich's "ethics of profession".

### **Strategies Employed by the Participants in Ethical Decision-Making**

When teachers face ethical dilemmas in their professional and personal lives, this theme illustrates the range of strategies they adopt. Participants described two major approaches: mindful and values-driven process and reflective and critical thinking. Likewise, the Strategies that the Participants employed in Ethical Decision-Making, i.e., mindful, and values-driven processes and reflective and critical thinking, reflect higher-level moral reasoning. According to the strategies, the teachers do not merely apply rules mechanically but also reflect on the moral aspect of their actions. This follows from Kohlberg's post-conventional level where ethical decisions are based on justice, care, and concern for learners. This reflection supports ethical practices that assist in creating inclusive, safe, and equitable learning environments.

The analysis of participants shows that teachers use reflective and principled approach for resolving ethical issues. Their decision-making practices are influenced by their own internal beliefs including personal values, faith, as well as external school rules and professional codes. Teachers avoid conflict by gathering information, exploring impact, weighing options, and justifying. This shows that when teachers make ethical decisions, they often use both their head and their heart. They will weigh their gut instincts against what the institution expects. The tactics they put in use, they show that they are honoring their responsibilities and not acting irresponsibly.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development holds that individuals make ethical decisions by reference to moral principles and rules that society imposes (Kohlberg, 1981). This reflects participants' use of personal beliefs and legitimate values. According to Rest's Four-Component Model, ethical action takes place only when moral sensitivity, moral judgement, moral motivation, and moral implementation occurs (Rest, 1986). The strategies, reflection, value alignment and rule adherence of the participants show these four components. Studies by Campbell (2013) and Shapira Lishchinsky (2011) similarly found that teachers make use of personal morality, professional ethics, and contextual features to deal with ethical dilemmas. According to Tirri (2018), the moral identity and school values of teachers often help to make the decision and is parallel to strategies in this theme.

*Mindful and Values-Driven Process.* This theme represents how participants define ethical decision making as

value-oriented with reference to its goal. The participants responded that when faced with a teaching situation that presents an ethical dilemma, they stop and think about their values and consult and think about the effect on the ethical life and work situation. Participants clarified that ethical choice is not an extempore choice; it must be a choice made through thought and reasoning with the knowledge that any action will have consequences for students, work colleagues and the college. The participants defined an ethical teacher to mean that on matters of right or wrong, they would allow conscience, moral code and sometimes faith to guide the fairness and equity of all actions and decisions. It indicates that a commitment to ethical principles is essential for earning integrity and trustworthiness of these teachers in practice.

This theme confirms Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) who claim that moral and ethical leadership in education should be manifested through professional standards of fairness, compassion, critique, and professionalism. The need for teachers to exercise ethical discernment when making decisions in these complicated situations was highlighted, given that they are forced to make difficult choices involving students, parents, and policies. It was justified by the participants needing to think, pray and talk before making a call in a big informal meeting. According to them, taking interest in the other's position along with one's own and possessing the moral courage to do what is right rather than what is easy is essential in making an ethical choice. This means that the reclamation of decisions is not only based on professional standards but also on a moral one and a spiritual one as understood by Shapiro and Stefkovich in their understandings of the ethics of the profession.

**Reflective and Critical Thinking.** The teaching staff's ethical decisions are informed by the participants' background beliefs, faith, and the educational environment's restrictions. These determinants, reported the participants, act as their moral guides when they must exercise their decision-making skills during work. The participants stated that within their upbringing, the family perception and the faith practiced have shaped their conscience to distinguish right from wrong in the process. Institutional policies and school rules help in guiding moral and professional decisions, ensuring no one goes past their responsibility and accountability lines. During the participants' work period, the reviewers said that the nexus of mentors and colleagues who lead by fantastic examples keeps them on track with their moral practices during professional work. This proves that people in the teaching profession share collective influences on moral practices within a working environment. Their sources claim that a combination of faith, the practice of shared values, and institutional rules guarantee a collective approach to ensuring professionals comply with ethical precepts and maintain the standard of their conduct in teaching.

According to Narvaez's theory of ethical expertise, teachers' ethical judgment is developed through integrating personal values, moral beliefs, and contextual understanding (Narvaez, 2016). According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, these behaviors show teachers functioning on post-conventional which indicates moral decisions are made in accordance with abstract ethical principles such as justice, human rights, and others. The reflections of participants suggest that their ethical reasoning may have been influenced by their personal values and religious beliefs but was still consistent with the institution's standards, showing principled moral autonomy. That kind of ethical maturity enables one to support SDG 4 (Quality Education). This helps foster educators whose ethical demonstration shapes integrity, fairness, and responsible citizenship in the learning environment.

### **Challenges Encountered by the Participants in Ethical Decision-Making**

Teachers often must sift through competing expectations and pressures to make decisions that are ethical. Participants identified three major challenges: (1) conflicting values and expectation, (2) moral judgement, and (3) difficulty in dealing with ethical issues. The challenges faced by the participants including conflicting values and expectations, moral judgment, difficulties in addressing ethical issues highlight tensions between rule-based reasoning and principle-based judgment. Teachers too often find themselves in dilemmas arising from a clash between institutional regulations and their deeply held personal and professional moral convictions, thus forcing them to negotiate and decide whether to follow authority or whether to remain committed to moral beliefs. These findings support Kohlberg's theory that moral reasoning develops when a person encounters a complex moral situation that requires judgment rather than mere rule-following.

According to the participants, the teachers' ethical decision-making is complicated and often emotionally taxing. The conflict between their moral beliefs and the institutions, colleagues, parents, or supervisors' expectations

leads to their challenges. Teachers face pressure to comply with contradictory rules, hazy policies, and manifold power relationship.

Addressing such dilemmas requires sensitivity, and courage, resilience, and professional judgment, and much more. The participants tell us that ethical decisions are not often clear-cut. Instead, teachers must manage fears of repercussions as well as relationships and institutional contexts to be honest, fair, and professional.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (1981) suggests that ethical decision-making becomes complicated when we are in a situation whereby, we have conflicting expectations. The teachers who took part in the research show a form of tension between conventional level where they act in accordance with institutional norms and post-conventional level where they act based on principles of justice and fairness even though institutions do not agree. According to Rest's Four-Component Model, moral judgements are not the same thing as moral actions. When social pressure or consequences intervene, it may be painful to be motivated and to implement (Rest, 1986). It is backed up by evidence. Tirri (2018) suggests that the moral courage of teachers helps them to act ethically socially in situations where the policies and expectations clash with beliefs.

*Conflicting Values and Expectation.* According to the main argument, teachers cannot keep their professional lives neutral owing to the conflict of ethical decision-making and outside pressure and competing interests. Teachers face challenges from peer pressure, administrative expectations, parental demands, and student diversity values, according to the findings. According to the participants, institutional dictates and their perceptions of rightness are often in conflict. As a result, participants find themselves unable to follow their ethical commitments and beliefs. These tangible experiences suggest a relational nature of ethical judgment in education that goes beyond only being a choice. It is also informed by interpersonal, institutional, and moral demand.

This statement was like recent study findings that show that ethical leaders should be able to recognize and respond to value conflict and competing demands with ethical and professional awareness (Arar, Saiti et al., 2016). Ethical leadership in education is more than rule-following; rather, ethical leadership requires reflective judgment and critical

discourse within communities of inquiry and values-based choices when making assessments, interacting with students, colleagues, and administrators, and making decisions that are fair, caring, and just (Arar, Saiti et al., 2016). According to Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory, such ethical decisions demonstrate postconventional reasoning whereby teachers act according to internalized principles of equity and respect rather than according to external pressure showing authenticity and moral agency. Testimonies from participants tell a story of wrestling with bureaucratic tensions that challenged their ethics yet maintained professional integrity while taking the ethical action rather than a convenient one. Teachers contribute to learning environments which nurture trust, accountability, and fairness by displaying ethical leadership traits: critical reflection, moral consistency, and principled autonomy. These practices need to be adopted to realize SDG 4: Quality Education, which seeks inclusive, equitable and ethical education systems with competent, ethical teachers.

*Moral Judgement.* The teachers communicate that, through this core theme, they are sometimes placed in moral dilemmas when the school district's work conflicts with their own values. They indicated that they observe the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers and some other regulations of the school; however, at times, their sense of equity, sympathy, and justice conflicts with the strict policies of the institution. For instance, some teachers indicated that their ethical perspectives of equity or compassion do not always coincide with the practices of grading, disciplining students, and making administrative decisions. Teachers find themselves caught in dilemmas like these. They must choose either to follow the school's rules or their moral philosophies. The conflict itself illustrates the complexity of ethical decision-making within education. A successful teacher must operationalize a balance of these two positions, institutional policies, and moral philosophies.

The theme generated confirms the views of Campbell (2017) who emphasized that moral responsibility is in the teaching profession and teachers must be ethical leaders who follow and do not set rules. According to Campbell, moral education requires a meditation of institutional regulation with an ethic of care. The narratives of the participants illustrate occasions in which the rules were not sufficient to encode ethics; these were the occasions

that they faced. The accounts from van der Kaaij and Metodiev provide a vivid example that decision-making is not just following a command but involves judgement and scholarship as well. Professionalism is attached to character, not to appearance.

*Difficulty in Dealing with Ethical Issues.* This important topic shows that teachers can address ethical challenges by responding to them according to their ethical principles while still being polite and honest to others. According to them, sometimes their conduct is contrary to the students, faculty, or the administration; however, they restrain their temper and remain patient and stick to ethical principles. Having a good character is the first rule to stay ethical when under stress. It is a mixture of self-control and unshakeable principles. Some individuals think ahead about what they are going to say before they say it while some people are constantly talking to each other in a way that does not start any fights. These stories indicate that being ethical does not just get represented by the ideals that teachers have; it is also by what they say and do when 'pressed'. When they are firm but polite, they act as enforcers on professional boundaries and create a climate of ethical touchstones that allow them to stand outside their ethical code.

As per this research, it confirms the claims made by Sanger and Osguthorpe (2016) regarding the development of patience, courage, respect, etc., in ethical professionalism under conditions of stress is indeed credible. According to the authors, ethical education means reconciling firm moral judgment with understanding others. Participants explicitly state this, namely, that they do not instinctively react with moral indignation or anger when disagreeing or under pressure they engage in reflective dialogue. The remarks make it apparent that ethical education is more than adhering to codes but involves the courage to persist without compromising the dignity of people in all circumstances.

### **Insights Shared in Improving Ethical Decision-Making**

The theme shows teachers' perspectives on strengthening ethical judgment in the workplace. They emphasized three key ideas: role of personal values, reflective ethical decision making, and being compassionate. Also, the insights on how factors such as personal values, reflective ethical decision-making and compassion can ward off unethical behavior highlight the ongoing relevance of Kohlberg's theory as an analytical lens. Teachers' constant reflection and moral reasoning processes are essential in ethical growth. This enables teachers to respond to actual events that take place at the school through ethical reasoning. In general, the findings support Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development as a consistent theoretical framework that effectively explains how moral reasoning is employed by public junior high school teachers in making ethical decisions in practice. It also consolidates the relationship between theory and the results in Chapter 4.

Those taking part in the study echo Altman's view that ethical improvement needs personal commitment and a supportive school setting. They feel dealing with situations in accordance with values, advice seeking, and candid self-reflection enables them to deal well with problems. They noted that a strong framework, along with flexibility and transparency, makes ethical choices clearer and easier. They said ethical development takes time; teamwork; and continuous self-evaluation strengthens it.

According to Kohlberg's moral development theory, ethical judgment improves by reflecting on principles of justice (Kohlberg, 1981). The guidance and reflection are both believed to boost moral sensitivity and judgment in Rest's (1986) four-component model. According to Campbell (2017), Shapira-Lishchinsky (2018) and Tirri (2018), collaboration and supportive school structure help teachers to reflect and make better ethical decisions.

These findings demonstrate that being an ethical decision-maker is part of teacher professionalism. Schools can be considered moral communities. Thus, reflecting on their ethical guidelines, collaborating, and strengthening them is helpful in creating a culture of integrity and fairness that informs responsible decision-making.

*Role of Personal Values.* The basic matter in this essential theme is that the teachers strongly hold the view that the right thing to do, and do it all the way with conviction, will, in the end, lead you to the righteous path. The participants said that honesty and moral integrity are the most important principles, and they guide people to make up their minds during difficult times. They stated that teachers should be principled, attentive, and forthright, even when other people influence them. Several participants mentioned belief and conscience

in making decisions, while others follow the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers.

According to Carvalho, Bonifácio and Proença (2025), it can be verifiable at this moment that the ethical essence of teaching rests on a deep commitment to honesty and integrity as well as moral responsibility. A group of scholars stated that ethics is an inherent and essential dimension of the profession of teaching. The teachers must be sincere, fair, and neutral in what they say and do. The study also highlighted that teachers have a professional responsibility to practice ethics since their behavior affects students' values, attitudes, and moral development. According to the testimony of the participants of the study, treating people fairly, and doing the right thing all the time, is at the heart of professional responsibility and ethical leadership. In the end, ethical teaching shows itself in teaching practices but also in real-life examples of teachers, in a difficult situation more than ever where moral consistency becomes most evident.

*Reflective Ethical Decision Making.* According to the essential theme, ethical decision-making in the teaching profession requires a process of constant reflective practice, spiritual support, and reading. According to the participants, the decision is not made in a haphazard manner but instead, the individual would be expected to practice, seek help and consult found resources such as colleague, mentor, and perhaps a book. The participants claimed that self-reflection about ethics, reading of moral philosophy, and listening to faith-related or psychological podcast helps in the elevation of consciousness for ethical choices. Prayer and reflection were reported by participants to bring them peace and clarity when needing to make ethical decisions. This means the proper decision making is to understand what is right or wrong. That is not all a matter of attitude, prompted by one's spirit which underlies wise decision making.

Based on Rest's Four-Component Model of Moral Behavior (1986), moral reflection is crucial in the formation of ethical competence. Therefore, this finding supports the conclusions of Rest. Rest explained further that ethical decision-making by a teacher assumes ethical perception, ethical judgment, motivation, and character, which, through modeling and reflective practice, grow over time. These constituents exhibited themselves in the participants through their prayers, reading, and mentorship. Their plain thoughts indicate that ethical action and ethical consistency in professional practice are based on continual self-reflection and learning.

The study validates Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (1971) which provides a psychological foundation for educational support for ethical development by reflection and mentoring. Kohlberg proposes a development of moral reasoning through stages, such as the transition from obedience to authority to principled, preverbal self-directed judgment. Teachers who mirror, mentor, and apply moral and spiritual guidance also exhibit more advanced moral reasoning, which is structured around a universal set of ethical principles rather than strict obedience to institutional rules. This theoretical framework supports the participants' claims that ethical development is supported by reflection and guided development as they try to translate into the deepest lived values: justice, caring, and integrity.

*Being Compassionate.* The essential theme of the issue is that the teachers consider the process of making ethical choices to be strengthened by their own conscience and the surrounding environment. The participants highlighted the significant role that institutions play in keeping teachers on the right course and behaving ethically. The participants mentioned having clear rules, on-going training and open conversation are very helpful. A couple of participants claimed that ethics seminars and workshops on capacity building can help teachers to apply practical tips on how to face real-life dilemmas. As the participants stated, if teachers are provided with an environment where they are allowed to voice their concerns without violation of trust, then ethical courage is also encouraged.

Such results echo Campbell's (2017) presented idea of ethical professionalism, highlighting that schools and education systems should have the role of supporting ethical environments through teaching and providing ethical guidelines at an institutional level. Campbell stated that the ethical professionalism of a teacher should develop if professionals with such values would work in the environment that would foster ethical understanding and a space to share discussions regarding ethical issues. The statements given by the interviewees confirm the above: organizations that support open talks about ethics and offer such training on a regular basis give the conditions to the teachers to accept morally correct and rational decisions. The institutional norms that demonstrate honesty and fairness are advocates of teachers' ethical identity and, thus, the basis of a common

ethical environment within the realm of education.

### **Implications for Educational Practice**

Results of the study show that teachers' lived experiences in making ethical decisions are considerably influenced by their ethical principles, faith, and professional responsibility. According to them, ethical decision making is doing the right thing, living by core values and professional ethics. Over the years, teachers have taken to view ethical decision-making as a test of character, when conditions are tough and real. This is consistent with Campbell (2017), who stated that while teachers are often compliant with the rule of law, their ethical decisions are drawn from an internalized ethic that is integral to their identity and role as moral exemplars. By grounding these implications in the data, teacher challenges such as value conflicts, institutional pressures and competing expectations may be better understood through Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory or Rest's Four-Component Model. These theories allow for a more concrete understanding of how teachers reason, evaluate and act in ethical dilemmas. This kind of framework enhances the implications because they show what the challenges identified mean for teachers' moral reasoning.

Further, the participants stressed the importance of being self-aware, having critical thinking skills and living in accordance with their values and those of the organization. Furthermore, the participants highlighted their use of an approach informed by values, the reconciliation of the requirements of their religion with their professional codes and rules, and ethical reasoning in day-to-day encounters with students. The above-mentioned strategies necessitate an improvement in the educational systems which incorporate ethical reasoning, reflection, and ethical communication for students and trainees in the training system.

Furthermore, every ethical issue that one sorts is far more convoluted than it might at first seem. Participants referenced cases that illustrated the difficulty and stress associated with making ethical decisions. Due to external pressures, inconsistent requirements from their institutions, and the threat of a positive decision, they often face ethical dilemmas. The study's findings confirm the relevance of having an ethical culture in schools so that good conduct is encouraged and rewarded. It is the school administration that has the responsibility to ensure that selected policies, styles of leadership, and communication exemplify and support honesty, justice, and moral courage.

In the following paragraphs, there were other participants who pointed out a very important technique in the development of the ethical decision-making process. This technique pertains to help from the organization, experts, and afterthought. In their remarks, they also mentioned that the development process takes a long time and is done in patience, cooperation, and continuous reflection of a person's values.

According to the results, ethics must be a personal and organizational responsibility. When a teacher takes a decision inside the class, he/she must invariably show integrity, honesty, and impartiality. The aim of the institution is to assist students in their moral development. Schools must go beyond the action of punishing students to implement a system of code that will assist teachers in becoming more ethical, assuming responsibilities, and being role models. Through trials and activities, education can be protected from its moral end or purpose of producing men that not only know what is good but also have the courage to do good.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The narratives of these participants illustrate the ethical and professional dilemmas of teachers who are working with a complex system of moral judgments. These narratives, highlight the lived experiences of the participants. The stories, memories and remarks of the teachers bring to the fore that being a teacher is not merely teaching or following a rule, it is also about sticking to your beliefs under pressure. The subthemes that the data presented, such as doing the right thing, being guided by core values and principles, teaching, and living with virtue as a fundamental element of education and being challenged with personal integrity for a passing test, are striking examples for teachers, that ethics, values, and morals happen to lie at the very core of education.

Ethical challenges and dilemmas direct the teachers of the profession: consciousness, faith, and balance are revealed. Their practice is that their private principles and the institution's policies should harmonize. Hence, the

spiritual and intellectual nature of an ethical judgment can also be assumed. Although they may be subjected to anonymous attacks, conflicting demands, and their honor and reputation are threatened, they can always advocate for the ethical principles they used. Thus, a moral theme is given, stating that ethical strength exists through thinking, talking with, and being kind to the students and their occupation.

The participants emphasized that ethical engagement calls for continuous intellectual thought, sustained as well as renewed effort, and the backing of institutions. They asked their school to take additional steps to make it a more ethical place where teachers do not worry about the outcomes of unlawful actions undertaken in the pursuit of truth, justice, and fairness. Their findings reveal that when schools host open discussions of non-violence principles to draft rules and put mentorship into effect, teachers become more ethically and professionally responsible in such cases.

Ultimately, my experience in this study is that the journey of maintaining your ethics is a lifelong one that you cannot complete in a blink of an eye. Teachers face tough choices every day and instead serve for truth though fairness is a matter of contention and with honesty, it is not every time. The fact that I did a practicum in Ethical Practice was a real revelation and now I understand that they, like the respondents, are in a similar position where they fear and suffer alone. Their courage and humility are proof that very much like their teachers, this profession has a very important requirement for a clear conscience and a good heart.

In conclusion, the findings of the study highlight that ethical action as both a shared and personal responsibility among members of the teaching community. Legislators, teachers, and managers should work together to put in place schools of excellence where ethics are not only taught but also lived every day. Teachers will continuously build not only their students' minds but also their hearts by always thinking about their actions to those they want to care for, as well as trusting God. This means that it may look hard to be done, but to do the right thing, even if it may mean risking the disapproval of a few members of society, should be considered the most important characteristic of an ideal teacher.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research was done by selecting 17 public junior high school teachers employed in Davao City Division. The findings were compelling in that they revealed what teachers think about the ethical decision-making process involved in their work. The scope of the study was intra-divisional, and it would be interesting to learn how different groups of people from diverse levels of education and institutional settings think on this matter.

This qualitative analysis makes the following recommendations:

The study serves to open a gateway for further research that will delve deeper into the ethical and moral issues in education. Future studies may investigate the expansion of this research by including elementary, secondary, and private education teachers to determine how ethical decision-making differs across various levels of education and schooling. Such comparative analysis may reveal a broader knowledge of the effect institutional culture has on teachers' ethical actions.

Other consecutive studies may rely on mixed-method or quantitative techniques to investigate the teachers' degree of ethical consciousness, the number of ethical dilemmas encountered, and the response to the related procedures. A larger number of cases could also contribute to the generalization of the research topic and provide more credibility supporting the emerging patterns.

Ethical decision-making is one of the factors that could be considered in another area of interest. Variables such as experience in teaching, education attainment, management positions, and a subject of workshops or seminars related to ethics can influence it.

The study would also benefit from investigating the impact of organizational culture, instructional leadership, and the support of governance on the moral conduct of teachers. Understanding the effect of the administrative system and school culture on ethical behaviors would enable educational managers to create a more supportive and ethical organizational culture.

It would also be advantageous for future researchers to undertake a longitudinal study to examine the evolution of teachers' ethical viewpoints and decision-making processes over time. Such a research study could indicate how teachers' moral development and competency to deal with ethical dilemmas improve through experience, reflection, and continuing professional development. Along with that, other researchers in the future may likewise do experimental studies in the other divisions of Region XI or in different divisions of the Philippines for the most part to gather broader data and to analyze the cultural, social, and institutional differences in the ethical conduct of teachers. This can lead to the creation of a nationwide system or model for teachers to follow in making moral decisions.

Therefore, following studies must focus on investigation and improvement of understanding of teachers' way of dealing with ethical issues in a school setting. Future study can improve the way teachers are guided in the profession by expanding the participants, techniques, and research focus to one of integrity, kindness, and accountability in the field of education.

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## GRADUATE SCHOOL

### Approval Sheet

This thesis titled, “NAVIGATING THE DILEMMA OF MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY,” of the University of the Immaculate Conception prepared and submitted by **ELIMELIE P. ATES** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Values Education, has been examined and is recommended for approval and acceptance.

**THELMA O. ALDERITE, EdD**

Adviser

### PANEL OF EXAMINERS

**Approved** by the thesis committee on oral examination with a grade of **PASSED**.

**SYLVIA J. PIDOR, PhD**

Chairperson

**LILIBETH R. LOZADA, MAEM**

Member

**FLORDELIS A. SEDO, MARE**

Member

**ERICK T. BALORAN, PhD**

External Panel Member

**ACCEPTED** and **APPROVED** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Values Education.

Comprehensive Examination- **PASSED**

November 2025

**MARY JANE B. AMOGUIS, DBM**

Dean, Graduate School

## APPENDIX

### A Permission Letters



Republic of the Philippines  
**Department of Education**  
Region XI  
**SCHOOLS DIVISION OF DAVAO CITY**

Office of the Schools Division Superintendent

September 9, 2025

**ELIMELIE P. ATES**

Proponent  
University of the Immaculate Conception  
Bonifacio Street, Davao City

Dear **Mr./Ms. Ates**,

We acknowledge receipt of your letter dated September 3, 2025, in which you requested permission to conduct a research study titled **"Navigating the Dilemma of Making Ethical Decisions: A Descriptive Qualitative Study."**

In this connection, permission is hereby granted provided the following conditions are met:

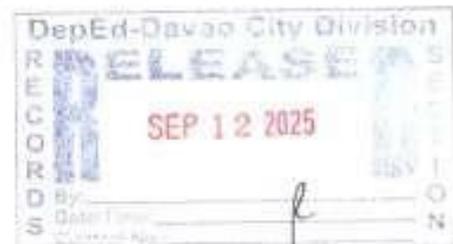
1. That prior arrangement with the school administrator be made;
2. That classes shall not be disrupted;
3. That all expenses relative to the activity shall be borne by the researcher;
4. That explicit consent and assent be obtained in writing from each participant prior to their participation in the research;
5. That participant must be informed of voluntary participation, that answer to specific questions may be withheld without penalty and that they may withdraw from the research at any time;
6. That participant should receive a full disclosure of the nature of the study, the risks; benefits, and alternatives, with an extended opportunity to ask questions;
7. That participant should receive assistance from any form of anxiety they experience throughout the research and thereafter;
8. That CONFIDENTIALITY and ANONYMITY of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter; and
9. That this office shall be furnished with the result of this study.

We trust that you will adhere to these conditions diligently to ensure the ethical conduct of your research. Your cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

Very truly yours,

**REYNANTE A. SOLITARIO, CESO V**  
Schools Division Superintendent





University of the Immaculate Conception

Bonifacio Street, Davao City 8000, Philippines  
(+63-082) 227-1573 local 240 + (+63-082) 227-3794  
(+63-082) 222-1606  
www.uic.edu.ph  
dcm-graduateschool@uic.edu.ph

Davao City National High School  
F. Torres St., Davao City



Office of the Dean of Graduate School

September 3, 2025

**DR. EVELYN MAGNO**  
Principal IV  
Davao City National High School  
Davao City, Davao Del Sur

Dear Mr./Ms. **MAGNO**,

The University of the Immaculate Conception Graduate School Department is excited to connect with you regarding an important research initiative.

We kindly request your support and approval for **Ms. ELIMELIE P. ATEs**, one of our dedicated students who is pursuing her *Master of Arts in Values Education*, to conduct a study that will involve Public Junior High School Teachers from three public secondary schools in Davao City, Region XI.

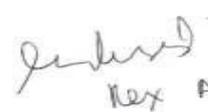
This request is in line with his/her research study entitled "**NAVIGATING THE DILEMMA OF MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY**".

Your support in approving this research will help us foster a collaborative effort, encouraging innovation and academic growth.

We look forward to your positive response and sincerely appreciate your approval in advancing this meaningful endeavor.

Sincerely,

  
**DR. MARY JANE B. AMOGUIS**  
Dean, Graduate School

  
Key A 

  
**EVELYN E. MAGNO**  
Principal IV

CHED Full Autonomous Status - PAASCU Accredited, Institutional Accreditation Status  
Bureau of Immigration Accredited - Deputized to offer ETEEP - Science Resource Center, DENR Recognized  
MEMBER: Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) - Association of Catholic Universities of the Philippines (ACUP) - ASEAN University Network (AUN-QA, Associate Member) - University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) - Association of Southeast and East Asian Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASEACCU)



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(+63-082) 222-1606  
www.uic.edu.ph  
dcm-graduateschool@uic.edu.ph

ERICO T. NOGRALES NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL



Office of the Dean of Graduate School

September 3, 2025

**ENGR. REDIRICK M. ELISTERIO**  
Principal II  
Erico T. Nograles National High School  
Davao City, Davao Del Sur

Dear Mr./Ms. **ELISTERIO**,

The University of the Immaculate Conception Graduate School Department is excited to connect with you regarding an important research initiative.

We kindly request your support and approval for **Ms. ELIMELIE P. ATEs**, one of our dedicated students who is pursuing her *Master of Arts in Values Education*, to conduct a study that will involve Public Junior High School Teachers from three public secondary schools in Davao City, Region XI.

This request is in line with his/her research study entitled "**NAVIGATING THE DILEMMA OF MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY**".

Your support in approving this research will help us foster a collaborative effort, encouraging innovation and academic growth.

We look forward to your positive response and sincerely appreciate your approval in advancing this meaningful endeavor.

Sincerely,

  
**DR. MARY JANE B. AMOGUIS**  
Dean, Graduate School

  
**REDIRICK M. ELISTERIO**  
Principal II

  
ERICO T. NOGRALES

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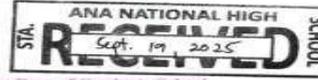


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 (63-082) 227-1573 local 240 / (63-082) 227-3794  
 (63-082) 222-3000  
 www.uic.edu.ph  
 dean-graduate@uic.edu.ph



Office of the Dean of Graduate School

September 3, 2025

**DR. WELITO IMPANG ROSAL**  
 Principal III  
 Sta. Ana National High School  
 Davao City, Davao Del Sur

Dear Mr./Ms. **ROSAL**,

The University of the Immaculate Conception Graduate School Department is excited to connect with you regarding an important research initiative.

We kindly request your support and approval for **Ms. ELIMELIE P. ATEs**, one of our dedicated students who is pursuing her *Master of Arts in Values Education*, to conduct a study that will involve Public Junior High School Teachers from three public secondary schools in Davao City, Region XI.

This request is in line with his/her research study entitled **"NAVIGATING THE DILEMMA OF MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY"**.

Your support in approving this research will help us foster a collaborative effort, encouraging innovation and academic growth.

We look forward to your positive response and sincerely appreciate your approval in advancing this meaningful endeavor.

Sincerely,

**DR. MARY JANE B. AMOGUIS**  
 Dean, Graduate School

Received: **JECHELLY D. SARANGA**  
 #T-11

**WELITO I. ROSAL**  
 PRINCIPAL III

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To Maam Ella  
 pls. facilitate

**Appendix B Ethical Clearance**



**University of the Immaculate Conception**

Rm 10, 3F, St. Joseph Bldg., Bonifacio Street, Davao City 8000, Philippines  
 227-3296 local 211  
 (63-082) 227-37-84  
 www.uic.edu.ph  
 rec@uic.edu.ph

Research Ethics Committee

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE**

September 2, 2025

**ELIMELIE P. ATEs**  
 University of the Immaculate Conception  
 Bonifacio Street, Davao City

Re: **NAVIGATING THE DILEMMA OF MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY**

Protocol Code: **GS-ER-08-25-0355**

Subject: **Ethical Clearance**

Dear **Mr/Ms. Ates**:

UIC-REC acknowledges the receipt of the following documents on August 30, 2025:  
 Revised manuscript: version2\_Ates  
 ICF: version2\_ICF\_Ates

These new documents have incorporated the recommendations of the UIC-REC, as stipulated in the **DECISION LETTER** emailed to you, to improve the initial protocol and ICF that you submitted earlier for **EXPEDITED** review, which took place on August 11, 2025.

Upon further scrutiny of and deliberation on the revised documents, the UIC-REC is convinced that your research/investigation embodies a process that is responsible and ethically accountable; thus, **ETHICAL CLEARANCE** with a validity period of **one year**, September 3, 2025 to September 3, 2026 has been granted.

Please be advised to submit the Final Report Form once you completed the study. Likewise, submit a report using the forms should any part of your research methodology and ICF, as outlined in your submitted approved documents, change in any way.

- A. Protocol Amendment
- B. Progress Report
- C. Protocol Deviation/Protocol Violation
- D. Negative Event Report
- E. Early Study Termination Report
- F. Application for Renewal of Ethical Clearance two months before expiry

The UIC-REC wishes you all the best with this research undertaking.

Very truly yours,

**Mona L. Laya, PhD**  
 Chair, UIC-REC

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 Bureau of Immigration Accredited - Deputized to offer ETEEAP - Science Resource Center, DENR Recognized  
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## Appendix C Endorsement for Pre-final Defense



**University of the Immaculate Conception**  
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 227-8286 local 211  
 (93-882) 227-37-94  
 www.uic.edu.ph  
 rec@uic.edu.ph

Research Ethics Committee

### ENDORSEMENT FOR PRE-FINAL DEFENSE

October 28, 2025

**ELIMELIE P. ATES**  
 University of the Immaculate Conception  
 Bonifacio Street, Davao City

Re: **NAVIGATING THE DILEMMA OF MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY**

Protocol Code: **GS-ER-08-25-0355**

Subject: **UIC-REC Endorsement for Pre-final Defense**

Dear Ms. Ates:

This is to acknowledge receipt of the following supporting documents on October 28, 2025.

- Filled out Protocol Final Report Form
- Signed ICF

Upon the verification of the submitted terminal documents, the UIC-REC officially approves and releases the Endorsement for Pre-final Defense for your study titled **NAVIGATING THE DILEMMA OF MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY**.

The UIC-REC commends your commitment to assure the technical and ethical merits of your investigation.

Very truly yours,

*Mona L. Laya, PhD*  
 Chair, UIC-REC

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 Bureau of Immigration Accredited • Deputized to offer ETEAP • Science Resource Center, DENR Recognized  
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Page 1 of 1



University of the Immaculate Conception  
 GRADUATE SCHOOL

### PRE-FINAL DEFENSE ENDORSEMENT FORM

DGS - FO - 018A  
 Rev. 01 / 10/01/2016  
 Approved by: IQAC

Control No. \_\_\_\_\_

**ELIMELIE P. ATES**

Name of Student/ Candidate

**MASTER OF ARTS IN VALUES EDUCATION**

Program of Study

Date: October 25, 2025

Title of the Thesis / Dissertation: **"NAVIGATING THE DILEMMA OF MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY"**

Dear **Dr. Amoguis**,

I have reviewed and fully endorsed the final manuscript attached for evaluation.

Thank you.



**DR. THELMA O. ALDERITE**

Thesis / Dissertation Adviser

(Signature over Printed Name)

Date/Time of Defense: **Nov. 18 @**

**10-AM**

Panel Chair: Dr. Sylvia Pidor

Panel Member: Prof Lilibeth Lozada

Panel Member: Prof **Flordelis Sedo**

Panel Member: Dr Erick Baloran

Approved by:

*DR. MARY JANE B. AMOGUIS*  
**DR. MARY JANE B. AMOGUIS**  
 Dean, Graduate School

#### Guidelines in Preparing for Thesis / Dissertation Final Defense

1. The applicant for thesis / dissertation final defense must be enrolled in Thesis / Dissertation Writing in the current semester.
2. S/he must secure and accomplish an Application Form from the office of the Dean of Graduate School.
3. When the form is accomplished, s/he must submit application to the Graduate Dean's office and arrange for tentative schedule of defense.

#### Process /Procedure for Final Defense

1. Secures and fills up a final defense endorsement form from the Administrative Assistant to be signed by the Adviser.
2. Pays the final defense fee at the cashier.
3. Submits the receipt to the Administrative Assistant and the manuscript, (7) for Doctorate student (5) for Masteral student to the assigned panels and adviser.
4. Endorses the candidate to the Program Coordinator for the schedule.
5. Schedules the final oral defense.

I, ELIMELIE P. ATES, a student of Master of Arts in Values Education respectfully requests the office of the dean of graduate school that I be given APPROVAL to present my thesis/ dissertation final before the members of the examination/ defense panel for Pre-Final Defense.

I swear to the best of my knowledge that I had passed the proposal defense given on

May 5, 2025.

(Inclusive dates & year)

Furthermore, I am aware that I have to submit my manuscript with the photocopy of the receipt of payments, not later than seven (7) days before the tentative date of my defense. I further know that if I fail to submit my manuscript on the specified period, the university reserves the right to reschedule the defense in such a way that it would not be prejudicial to either party; and that I am solely responsible for the delay of my defense.



**ELIMELIE P. ATES**

Date: October 25, 2025

Applicant

Recommended by:

Endorsed by:

**DR. THELMA O. ALDERITE**

**DR. THELMA O. ALDERITE**

Adviser

Course Coordinator

Approved by:

**DR. MARY JANE B. AMOGUIS**

Dean, Graduate School

### Appendix D Informed Consent Form



University of the Immaculate Conception  
Research Ethics Committee (REC)  
Bonifacio Street, Davao City, Philippines

REC\_FO\_0031  
Control No.: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Ethics Informed Consent Form (ICF)

Informed Consent Form for EMIL S. CADESIM

Name of the Researcher(s) ELIMELIE P. ATES

Institution: UNIVERSITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

TITLE: "NAVIGATING THE DILEMMA OF MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY"

#### INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by ELIMELIE P. ATES at the University of the Immaculate Conception, because you fit the inclusion criteria for informants of our study.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Please read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will be given a copy of this form.

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This descriptive qualitative study will explore the challenges of making ethical decisions among the Public Junior High School Teachers in Davao City Division.

#### STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study,

- You are requested to sign this ICF to signify your voluntary participation.
- You will take part in an In-Depth Interview that will last about 30 to 45 minutes and have 10 to 17 open-ended questions regarding how you make ethical decisions in your teaching.
- You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and you can leave the study at any time without any consequences.
- The researcher (the person who signed this) will do the interview or FGD by herself.



University of the Immaculate Conception  
**Research Ethics Committee (REC)**  
 Bonifacio Street, Davao City, Philippines

REC\_FO\_0031  
 Control No.: \_\_\_\_\_

- With your permission, the conversation will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy of information.
- Usually, the interview will only happen once. If it requires further clarification, you may be asked to do a quick follow-up.
- You may also take part in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to share your insights and experiences with others.
- Field notes will be taken during the interview/FGD, and all responses will be transcribed for thematic analysis.

**POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

- The topic at hand is not sensitive. If you do not want to answer any of the questions, however, you can choose not to participate in the study or leave if you do not feel like you can continue.
- You can also feel tired or worn out during the interview. To lower this danger, you can take breaks whenever you like, ask to stop, or move the session, or end the interview early if you feel exhausted.
- The researcher will keep an eye on how comfortable you are during the session and change the speed of the interview as appropriate.
- I appreciate your involvement and will prioritize your welfare and well-being throughout the study.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

This study will provide Junior High School teachers useful information about how they make moral decisions, which may help them better understand the elements that affect their choices. Teachers can better handle moral challenges in the classroom if they know what factors affect their ethical decisions. This can create a learning atmosphere based on principles where not only are ethical actions taught, but also regularly exhibited. This will help both the teachers and the students in the long run.

The study's findings may also be advantageous for educational leaders, school administrators, and curriculum developers. Educational leaders can utilize the results to establish rules and training programs that help teachers make moral decisions and make them stronger. Curriculum developers may be encouraged to incorporate authentic ethical dilemmas and practical applications into ESP resources, guaranteeing that moral reasoning and ethical frameworks are not merely theoretical but also applicable in educational environments.

Furthermore, this study can be beneficial to DepEd officials and politicians by identifying areas necessitating enhancements in support systems, training, and legislation. These insights can assist make sure that ESP teachers are well-prepared

Telephone No. (082) 227-82-86 (loc. 211) • Email Address: rec@uic.edu.ph

Page 2 of 8



University of the Immaculate Conception  
**Research Ethics Committee (REC)**  
 Bonifacio Street, Davao City, Philippines

REC\_FO\_0031  
 Control No.: \_\_\_\_\_

to deal with moral problems with confidence and skill. Ultimately, raising the bar for ethical standards in education will help students grow in all areas and create a school culture that is more focused on ethics. This will lead to the creation of responsible and morally upright citizens who can make a good difference in society.

**DATA PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

The study will ensure the privacy and confidentiality of your information. Following the Data Privacy Act of 2012, the researcher will adhere to the protection of your human rights to information. Your responses will be treated with the highest respect, and your identities will be safeguarded, enabling you to participate without fear. In this study, any identifiable information obtained in relevance to the study will remain confidential, except if necessary to protect your rights or welfare. This section of the informed consent will ensure that the researcher will resist the release of information about your participation to people who are not connected with the study. Files containing your information will also be named in a way that is only recognizable by the researcher; further, when the results of the research are published or discussed in research conferences, no identifiable information will be used.

**VOLUNTARINESS OF PARTICIPATION AND RIGHTS TO WITHDRAW FROM THE RESEARCH**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

**REIMBURSEMENT AND COMPENSATION**

As a token of appreciation for your time and participation in this study, you will all receive the same amount of ₱100. You can choose whether to get the incentive as cellphone load or through GCash transfer. The Data Privacy Act of 2012 says that we can only collect your personal information, like your email address or phone number, to send you the incentive. No one will get this information, and it will be deleted right away after the incentive has been allocated.

**INVESTIGATOR'S and ADVISER'S CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher through the mobile phone number 09154310129 or through email at [elimeleates59@gmail.com](mailto:elimeleates59@gmail.com); or if you need to see her, she can be located at **Purok Tambis Tagakpan Davao City**; or you may contact her research adviser **Dr. Thelma O. Alderite**, through her email at [talderite@uic.edu.ph](mailto:talderite@uic.edu.ph). Her adviser is the research

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Page 3 of 8



University of the Immaculate Conception  
 Research Ethics Committee (REC)  
 Bonifacio Street, Davao City, Philippines

REC\_FO\_0031  
 Control No.: \_\_\_\_\_

consultant of the University of the Immaculate Conception Graduate School, Bonifacio Street, Davao City.

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your right as a research participant or the research in general and are unable to contact the research team, or if you want to talk to someone independent of the research team, please contact the University of the Immaculate Conception Research Ethics Committee at 227-4860 or 2061- local 211.

**RESEARCH PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT**

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form. I can withdraw my consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.

[Signature]  
 Signature above Printed Name of Participant

9/18/2025  
 Date Signed

To be accomplished by the Researcher Obtaining Consent:

I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this document and freely consents to participate.

ELIMELIE P. ATES  
 Name of Person Obtaining Consent

August 3, 2025  
 Date Signed

**Appendix E Validation Forms**



University of the Immaculate Conception  
 GRADUATE SCHOOL

**VALIDATION FORM FOR THE  
 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH GUIDE  
 QUESTIONNAIRE**

DGS - FO - 022  
 Rev. 01 / 10/01/2016

Control No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Evaluator: Dr. Sylvia J. Pidor  
 Degree: PhD  
 Position: Graduate School Faculty  
 Number of Years in Teaching and Research: \_\_\_\_\_

To the Evaluator:

Using this assessment form, kindly determine the validity of the attached instrument in relation to the purpose of the study; specifically with regard to the research questions as stipulated (See also the attached documents revealing the Title and Purpose of the Study). There are three areas to be examined, namely, Introduction Key Components, Questions, and Closing Key Components. The question items must be evaluated in terms of their clarity, suitability, understandability, and ability to elicit personal narratives, comments, opinions, and insights from the research participants. Please check the corresponding rating and write the necessary remarks.

SECTIONS	ITEMS	EVALUATION		
		YES	NO	REMARKS
Introduction Key Components	1. Is there an opening statement expressing gratitude to the research participant for his or her willingness to join the session?	/		
	2. Does this section of the questionnaire reveal the name of the researcher? (i.e. the researcher introducing himself or herself)	/		
	3. Is the purpose explicitly stated?	/		
	4. Is the duration of the session clearly stipulated?	/		
	5. Is there a statement assuring the research participant of the confidentiality of his or her responses?	/		
	6. Does this section explain how the in-depth interview or the focus group discussion be conducted?	/		
	7. Does this section include a statement assuring the research participant of his or her opportunity to be clarified further before proceeding to the intended activity?	/		
	8. Does this section provide spaces for the signature of the research participant?	/		
	9. Does it require a witness to sign?		N/A	
	10. Does this section stipulate the need for a legal guardian to sign as in the case of a		N/A	



University of the Immaculate Conception  
GRADUATE SCHOOL

DGS - F0 - 022

Rev. 01 / 10/01/2016

**VALIDATION FORM FOR THE  
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH GUIDE  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

Control No.: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Questions</b>	research participant under 18 years of age?			
	11. Are there no more than 15 questions (i. e. no more than 3 research questions with no more than 5 probing questions each)?	/		
	12. Are factual questions asked first before the probing questions?	/		
	13. Are there questions requiring the participant to describe his or her experiences?	/		
	14. Are there questions requiring the participant to explain the meaning of his or her shared experiences?	/		
	15. Are the vocabulary level and language structure of the questions appropriate to the age and capability of the research participant?	/		
	16. Are the questions clear and understandable?	/		
<b>Closing Key Components</b>	17. Do the questions possess the ability to elicit qualitative data relevant to the attainment of the objectives of the study?	/		
	18. Does this section guarantee the participant of his or her chance to give additional comments?	/		
	19. Does this section inform the research participant of the researcher's plan regarding the data being collected, its analysis, and the corresponding report and what the researcher would do next?	/		
	20. Does this section of the questionnaire express gratitude to the research participant?	/		



Signed: SYLVIA J. PIDOR  
Signature over printed name



University of the Immaculate Conception  
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Rev. 01 / 10/01/2016

**VALIDATION FORM FOR THE  
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH GUIDE  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

Control No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Evaluator: Dr. Lilibeth Lozada  
 Degree: PhD  
 Position: Graduate School Faculty  
 Number of Years in Teaching and Research: \_\_\_\_\_

**To the Evaluator:**

Using this assessment form, kindly determine the validity of the attached instrument in relation to the purpose of the study; specifically with regard to the research questions as stipulated (See also the attached documents revealing the Title and Purpose of the Study). There are three areas to be examined, namely, Introduction Key Components, Questions, and Closing Key Components. The question items must be evaluated in terms of their clarity, suitability, understandability, and ability to elicit personal narratives, comments, opinions, and insights from the research participants. Please check the corresponding rating and write the necessary remarks.

SECTIONS	ITEMS	EVALUATION		
		YES	NO	REMARKS
<b>Introduction Key Components</b>	1. Is there an opening statement expressing gratitude to the research participant for his or her willingness to join the session?	/		
	2. Does this section of the questionnaire reveal the name of the researcher? (i.e the researcher introducing himself or herself)	/		
	3. Is the purpose explicitly stated?	/		
	4. Is the duration of the session clearly stipulated?	/		
	5. Is there a statement assuring the research participant of the confidentiality of his or her responses?	/		
	6. Does this section explain how the in-depth interview or the focus group discussion be conducted?	/		
	7. Does this section include a statement assuring the research participant of his or her opportunity to be clarified further before proceeding to the intended activity?	/		
	8. Does this section provide spaces for the signature of the research participant?	/		
	9. Does it require a witness to sign?		N/A	
	10. Does this section stipulate the need for a legal guardian to sign as in the case of a		N/A	



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**VALIDATION FORM FOR THE  
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 QUESTIONNAIRE**

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Control No.: \_\_\_\_\_

	research participant under 18 years of age?			
<b>Questions</b>	11. Are there no more than 15 questions (i. e. no more than 3 research questions with no more than 5 probing questions each)?	/		
	12. Are factual questions asked first before the probing questions?	/		
	13. Are there questions requiring the participant to describe his or her experiences?	/		
	14. Are there questions requiring the participant to explain the meaning of his or her shared experiences?	/		
	15. Are the vocabulary level and language structure of the questions appropriate to the age and capability of the research participant?	/		
	16. Are the questions clear and understandable?	/		
	17. Do the questions possess the ability to elicit qualitative data relevant to the attainment of the objectives of the study?	/		
<b>Closing Key Components</b>	18. Does this section guarantee the participant of his or her chance to give additional comments?	/		
	19. Does this section inform the research participant of the researcher's plan regarding the data being collected, its analysis, and the corresponding report and what the researcher would do next?	/		
	20. Does this section of the questionnaire express gratitude to the research participant?	/		



Signed: LILIBETH LOZADA  
 Signature over printed name



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**VALIDATION FORM FOR THE  
 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH GUIDE  
 QUESTIONNAIRE**

DGS – FO – 022  
 Rev. 01 / 10/01/2016  
 Approved by: IQAC

Control No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Evaluator: Prof. Flordelis A. Sedo  
 Degree: MA in THEOLOGY Major in Religious Education  
 Position: SHS FACULTY  
 Number of Years in Teaching and Research: 26 Years

To the Evaluator:

Using this assessment form, kindly determine the validity of the attached instrument in relation to the purpose of the study; specifically with regard to the research questions as stipulated (See also the attached documents revealing the Title and Purpose of the Study). There are three areas to be examined, namely, Introduction Key Components, Questions, and Closing Key Components. The question items must be evaluated in terms of their clarity, suitability, understandability, and ability to elicit personal narratives, comments, opinions, and insights from the research participants. Please check the corresponding rating and write the necessary remarks.

SECTIONS	ITEMS	EVALUATION		
		YES	NO	REMARKS
<b>Introduction Key Components</b>	1. Is there an opening statement expressing gratitude to the research participant for his or her willingness to join the session?	/		
	2. Does this section of the questionnaire reveal the name of the researcher? (i.e the researcher introducing himself or herself)	/		
	3. Is the purpose explicitly stated?		/	The purpose of the study is not sufficiently elaborated. It should explain not only what the study will explore but also its significance, contribution to education, potential beneficiaries (teachers, students, schools, policymakers), and alignment with broader educational goals (e.g., SDG 4).



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**VALIDATION FORM FOR THE  
 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH GUIDE  
 QUESTIONNAIRE**

Control No.: \_\_\_\_\_

	4. Is the duration of the session clearly stipulated?	/		
	5. Is there a statement assuring the research participant of the confidentiality of his or her responses?	/		
	6. Does this section explain how the in-depth interview or the focus group discussion be conducted?	/		
	7. Does this section include a statement assuring the research participant of his or her opportunity to be clarified further before proceeding to the intended activity?	/		
	8. Does this section provide spaces for the signature of the research participant?	/		
	9. Does it require a witness to sign?	/		
	10. Does this section stipulate the need for a legal guardian to sign as in the case of a research participant under 18 years of age?			Not applicable, since the respondents are already professionals aged 18 years and above
<b>Questions</b>	11. Are there no more than 15 questions (i. e. no more than 3 research questions with no more than 5 probing questions each)?	/		
	12. Are factual questions asked first before the probing questions?	/		
	13. Are there questions requiring the participant to describe his or her experiences?	/		
	14. Are there questions requiring the participant to explain the meaning of his or her shared experiences?	/		



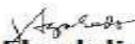
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**VALIDATION FORM FOR THE  
 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH GUIDE  
 QUESTIONNAIRE**

Control No.: \_\_\_\_\_

	15. Are the vocabulary level and language structure of the questions appropriate to the age and capability of the research participant?	/		
	16. Are the questions clear and understandable?	/		
	17. Do the questions possess the ability to elicit qualitative data relevant to the attainment of the objectives of the study?	/		
<b>Closing Key Components</b>	18. Does this section guarantee the participant of his or her chance to give additional comments?	/		
	19. Does this section inform the research participant of the researcher's plan regarding the data being collected, its analysis, and the corresponding report and what the researcher would do next?	/		
	20. Does this section of the questionnaire express gratitude to the research participant?	/		

  
**Prof. Flordelis A. Sedo**  
 Evaluator's Name and Signature

## Appendix F Research Instruments

### Part I. Preliminaries

Dear Participants,

The undersigned is conducting a study entitled "NAVIGATING THE DILEMMA OF MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY." In this view, the researcher humbly asks for your time to participate in the in-depth interview which would last for 30–40 minutes. In case you have questions or clarifications in the process, please feel free to express them. Rest assured that the information you give will be treated with maximum confidentiality and will not be used in any way that may harm your reputation.

Thank you for your kind cooperation as a research participant.

Very truly yours,



Elimelie P. Ates-MAVED  
 Researcher

### Part II. Interview Proper

#### Guide Questions

Research Questions	Sub-Questions
1. How do the participants regard ethical decision-making?	1.1. Can you describe what ethical decision-making means to you in your personal or professional context?
	1.2. What values or principles guide you when making ethical choices?
	1.3. How important do you think ethical decision-making is in your work/life? Why?
	1.4. Can you share an example of a situation where you had to reflect on your ethical stance?
2. What strategies do participants employ when making ethical decisions?	2.1. What steps do you usually take when faced with an ethical dilemma?
	2.2. Who or what influences your decisions (e.g., personal values, policies, mentors, religion, culture)?
	2.3. Do you follow any formal framework, guidelines, or personal rules when making ethical choices?
	2.4. Can you recall a specific instance where you applied a particular strategy to resolve an ethical issue?
3. What challenges do the participants encounter when making ethical decisions?	3.1. What makes ethical decision-making difficult in your experience?
	3.2. Are there situations where your personal values conflict with organizational rules or expectations?
	3.3. How do you handle pressure from others when your ethical stance differs from theirs?
	3.4. Can you share an experience where making the right ethical choice came with risks or consequences?
4. What insights can the participants share to improve their ethical decision-making?	4.1. Based on your experiences, what advice would you give to others facing ethical dilemmas?
	4.2. What practices or tools do you think can strengthen ethical decision-making?
	4.3. How can organizations or institutions better support ethical decision-making among their members?
	4.4. Looking back, what would you do differently in handling past ethical decisions?

### Part III Concluding Statements

1. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences in making ethical decisions as a teacher?
2. May I contact you again in case I need further clarification about your responses in this interview?
3. Thank you very much for your cooperation.



Elimelie P. Ates  
 Researcher



Dr. Thelma O. Alderite  
 Adviser

## Appendix G



*University of the Immaculate Conception*

Benifacio Street, Davao City 8000, Philippines  
 (63-082) 227-1573 local 240 / (63-082) 227-3794  
 (63-082) 222-3506  
 www.uic.edu.ph  
 dean-graduate@uic.edu.ph

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### AI Compliance Certificate

This is to certify that the AI-generated content within this thesis/dissertation titled **NAVIGATING THE DILEMMA OF MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY** authored by **ELIMELIE P. ATES** of the **MASTER OF ARTS IN VALUES EDUCATION** program is compliant with the allowable percentage of AI usage as specified by the Policies and Guidelines on Academic Integrity of the Graduate School Department. Specifically, the AI-generated content does not exceed 20% of the total content, in accordance with the applicable standards and regulations.

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Dr. Thelma O. Alderite  
 Thesis/Dissertation Adviser

  
Dr. Thelma O. Alderite  
 Program Coordinator

  
Dr. Mary Jane B. Amoguis  
 Dean, Graduate School

CHED Full Autonomous Status • PAASCU Accredited, Institutional Accreditation Status  
 Bureau of Immigration Accredited • Deputized to offer ETEEAP • Science Resource Center, DENR Recognized

MEMBER: Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) • Association of Catholic Universities of the Philippines (ACUP) • ASEAN University Network (AUN-QA, Associate Member) • University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) • Association of Southeast and East Asian Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASEACCU)



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## Appendix H Similarity Index & AI Report


Page 2 of 126 - Integrity Overview

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## Appendix I Editing Certificate

## Appendix J Certificate of Originality



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Bonifacio Campus, Davao City

### CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

Date: October 25, 2025

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief. It contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material to which a substantial extent has been expected for award of any degree or diploma of a university or another institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my work, even though I may have received assistance from others on style, presentation, and language expression.



ELIMELIE P. ATES - MAVED

Name and Degree of Candidate

October 25, 2026

Date



DR. THELMA O. ALDERITE

Name of Adviser

October 25, 2025

Date

## Curriculum Vitae



**Mrs. Elimelie P. Ates**

### **PERSONAL DATA:**

Birthplace: Manubuan Matalam Cotabato Civil Status: Married Occupation: Teacher I Religion: CAMACOP

(Alliance) Nationality:

Filipino

E-mail Address:

**ELIGIBILITY:**

Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET)

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:**

Postgraduate: Master of Arts in Values Education

University of the Immaculate Conception Davao City

College: Bachelor of Arts in Theology

Ebenezer Bible College and Seminary Upper Calarian

Zamboanga City (2021) Bachelor of Religious Education Mt.Apo Alliance Bible College

Bulatukan Makilala North Cotabato (2016)

Secondary: Matalam High School

Matalam Cotabato (2004)

Primary: Matalam Central Elementary School

Matalam Cotabato (2000)

**EMPLOYMENT RECORD:**

1. Teacher 1

Erico T. Nograles National High School Brgy. 37-D Trading Boulevard, Davao City 8000 January 23, 2025- up to present

2. Auxiliary Teacher 1

Davao City National High School

F. Torres St., Davao City 8000 September 16, 2024 – January 22, 2025

3. Private Tutor

Isafor Tutorial Center Obrero, Davao City 8000

July 14, 2023 – September 15, 2024

4. Kindergarten Teacher

Sunbeam Midsayap Learning Center, Inc Midsayap North Cotabato 9410 June 3, 2019 – May 30, 2020

5. Kindergarten Teacher

Villarica Full Gospel Learning Center, Inc Villarica Midsayap, Cotabato 9410 June 4, 2018 – March 30, 2019