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# Administrative and Personal Barriers to Graduate Study Progress among Public School Teachers: Basis for an Action Plan

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined administrative and personal barriers associated with graduate study progress among public school teachers in Cebu and Negros Provinces, Philippines, during School Year 2026–2027. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, data were collected from 116 teachers pursuing graduate studies through a structured questionnaire. Frequency and percentage described respondents' profiles; weighted means summarized the extent of barriers and perceived progress; and Pearson's product-moment correlation assessed associations between progress and barrier dimensions at the .05 significance level. Respondents were predominantly female, aged 36–45, and Teacher III; most had pursued graduate study for two years or less and identified professional advancement as their primary purpose. Administrative barriers were generally rated at a low extent, with workload and ancillary assignments receiving the highest composite mean (M = 2.55). Personal barriers were rated at a moderate extent, particularly physical and emotional fatigue (M = 3.17), financial and commuting burdens (M = 3.11), and family and caregiving responsibilities (M = 2.82). Perceived progress was moderate for academic requirements (M = 3.25), milestones (M = 3.16), and expected timeline adherence (M = 3.28), while overall progress was rated Agree (M = 3.40). Significant positive associations were observed for four administrative dimensions and two personal dimensions. Because barrier ratings and progress scores were positively correlated, these associations require careful interpretation and do not establish causality. The findings informed an action plan emphasizing workload and schedule coordination, administrative guidance, financial-assistance awareness, well-being support, and progress monitoring.

**Keywords**: administrative barriers; personal barriers; graduate study progress; public school teachers; action plan

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Graduate education is an important avenue for teachers' professional learning, career advancement, and development of instructional and leadership competencies. In the Philippine public-school context, teachers are encouraged to pursue continuing professional development while maintaining their teaching and school responsibilities. Yet the pursuit of a graduate degree often occurs alongside full-time employment, family obligations, financial commitments, and travel between home, school, and graduate institutions. These intersecting demands can make progress through graduate coursework, research, and degree milestones uneven.

The barriers to graduate study can be understood as administrative or institutional and personal. Administrative barriers include the support teachers receive from school leadership, workload and ancillary assignments, schedule accommodation, implementation of study-leave provisions, and access to information and coordination. Personal barriers include caregiving and household responsibilities, tuition and research expenses, commuting demands, physical and emotional fatigue, and challenges to motivation or academic self-efficacy. These dimensions are interconnected: institutional scheduling and workload practices may shape

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the time and energy available for study, while personal conditions may affect how teachers manage academic requirements.

Tinto's Student Integration Theory provides a perspective on persistence by emphasizing the role of academic and institutional experiences in students' continued participation. Self-Determination Theory further highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness as psychological needs relevant to sustained motivation. In the present context, supportive administrative practices and accessible academic guidance may help teachers remain engaged, while fatigue, financial strain, and competing responsibilities may complicate progress. Philippine policy foundations, including Republic Act No. 4670 (Magna Carta for Public School Teachers) and Republic Act No. 10912 (Continuing Professional Development Act of 2016), recognize the relevance of teachers' professional development and continuing learning.

Although the importance of graduate education is widely recognized, context-specific evidence is needed to identify which barriers teachers report and how those barriers are associated with perceived progress. This study addressed that need by examining public school teachers pursuing graduate studies in Cebu and Negros Provinces. It described respondents' profiles, assessed administrative and personal barriers, determined perceived graduate study progress, and tested associations between progress and the identified barriers. The results were used to formulate an action plan responsive to the observed areas of concern.

### Research questions

The study addressed five questions: (1) What is the profile of respondents in terms of age, gender, teaching position, length of service, duration of graduate study, purpose, and program enrolled? (2) To what extent are administrative and personal barriers experienced? (3) What is the perceived level of graduate study progress in academic requirements, milestones, timeline adherence, and overall degree progress? (4) Are graduate study progress and administrative or personal barrier dimensions significantly related? (5) What action plan may be proposed based on the findings?

## 2. METHODS

### Research design and setting

A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed. The descriptive component summarized respondent characteristics, barrier ratings, and perceived progress. The correlational component examined the relationships between progress and the administrative and personal barrier dimensions without manipulating the respondents' conditions. The study was situated in selected public schools in Cebu and Negros Provinces, Philippines, during School Year 2026–2027.

### Participants

The study included 116 public school teachers pursuing graduate studies. The respondents represented different ages, teaching positions, years of service, graduate-study durations, purposes for enrollment, and graduate programs. The manuscript describes the participants as teachers from Cebu and Negros Provinces; the results are therefore interpreted within this sample and setting.

### Instrument and data collection

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire informed by literature and measurement guidance on work–family conflict, academic self-efficacy and study progress, teacher professional development, and working conditions. The instrument comprised four parts: respondent profile; administrative and personal barriers; perceived graduate study progress; and information intended to inform an action plan. Administrative barriers covered administrative approval and support, workload and ancillary assignments, scheduling and time accommodation, study-leave and policy implementation, and information and coordination support. Personal barriers covered family and caregiving responsibilities, financial and commuting burdens, physical

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and emotional fatigue, and motivation and self-efficacy erosion. Progress indicators covered academic requirements, milestones, expected timeline adherence, and overall degree progress.

The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms. The researcher secured the required permissions, provided information about the study and voluntary participation, and distributed the form to identified teachers through online communication channels. Respondents were given time to complete the questionnaire; submissions were reviewed for completeness and consistency before analysis. Responses were organized and prepared for statistical treatment.

**Scoring and statistical analysis**

The questionnaire used five-point response scales. Barrier items were scored from 1 (Very Low Extent) to 5 (Very Great Extent); progress items were scored from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Item and dimension means were interpreted using the ranges reported in the manuscript: 1.00–1.79, 1.80–2.59, 2.60–3.39, 3.40–4.19, and 4.20–5.00. SPSS was used to organize and analyze the data. Frequency and percentage described the profile; weighted means summarized barrier dimensions and progress; and Pearson's r examined relationships at $\alpha = .05$. Correlation results were considered associations rather than causal effects.

## 3. RESULTS

**Respondent profile**

The sample was predominantly female (96; 82.76%), while 18 respondents (15.52%) were male, one (0.86%) identified as LGBTQ, and one (0.86%) preferred not to disclose gender. The largest age groups were 36–45 years (45; 38.79%) and 26–35 years (44; 37.93%). Half of the respondents held Teacher III positions (59; 50.86%). A total of 30 respondents (25.86%) reported 6–10 years of service and 29 (25.00%) reported 11–15 years. Most had pursued graduate study for 0–2 years (67; 57.76%), and professional advancement was the most frequently reported purpose (69; 59.48%). The most common program was MAEd in Administration and Supervision (45; 38.79%).

| Profile variable | Category with largest share | n | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 36–45 years | 45 | 38.79 |
| Gender | Female | 96 | 82.76 |
| Teaching position | Teacher III | 59 | 50.86 |
| Length of service | 6–10 years | 30 | 25.86 |
| Graduate-study duration | 0–2 years | 67 | 57.76 |
| Purpose | Professional advancement | 69 | 59.48 |
| Program enrolled | MAEd Administration and Supervision | 45 | 38.79 |

**Administrative barriers**

All five administrative dimensions were rated at a low extent. Workload and ancillary assignments had the highest composite mean (M = 2.55), followed by scheduling and time accommodation (M = 2.28), administrative approval and support (M = 2.22), study-leave and policy implementation (M = 2.18), and information and coordination support (M = 2.06). Although the composite ratings were low, selected items were relatively more prominent. Required school reports reducing time for graduate research or writing received a mean of 2.61 (moderate extent), and difficulty obtaining approval to attend graduate activities received a mean of 2.62 (moderate extent).

| Administrative dimension | Mean | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| Workload and ancillary assignments | 2.55 | Low extent |
| Scheduling and time accommodation | 2.28 | Low extent |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Administrative approval and support | 2.22 | Low extent |
| Study-leave and policy implementation | 2.18 | Low extent |
| Information and coordination support | 2.06 | Low extent |

**Personal barriers**

Personal barriers were rated at a moderate extent across all four dimensions. Physical and emotional fatigue had the highest mean (M = 3.17), followed by financial and commuting burdens (M = 3.11), family and caregiving responsibilities (M = 2.82), and motivation and self-efficacy erosion (M = 2.64). The highest item-level rating within fatigue concerned work-related stress interfering with concentration on graduate tasks (M = 3.22). In the financial and commuting dimension, expenses for research, materials, and internet access received M = 3.25, and graduate-school fees received M = 3.22. Within family and caregiving, unexpected family needs disrupting planned academic activities received M = 3.01.

| **Personal dimension** | **Mean** | **Interpretation** |
|---|---|---|
| Physical and emotional fatigue | 3.17 | Moderate extent |
| Financial and commuting burdens | 3.11 | Moderate extent |
| Family and caregiving responsibilities | 2.82 | Moderate extent |
| Motivation and self-efficacy erosion | 2.64 | Moderate extent |

**Perceived graduate study progress**

Respondents moderately agreed that they were completing academic requirements (M = 3.25), achieving academic milestones (M = 3.16), and adhering to the expected study timeline (M = 3.28). Overall progress toward degree completion received a mean of 3.40, interpreted as Agree. The results suggest that respondents generally perceived themselves as moving toward degree completion, although the ratings for requirements, milestones, and timeline adherence indicated that progress was not uniformly strong.

| **Progress dimension** | **Mean** | **Interpretation** |
|---|---|---|
| Completion of academic requirements | 3.25 | Moderately Agree |
| Achievement of academic milestones | 3.16 | Moderately Agree |
| Adherence to expected study timeline | 3.28 | Moderately Agree |
| Overall progress toward degree completion | 3.4 | Agree |

**Relationships between progress and barriers**

Pearson correlation analysis identified statistically significant associations between perceived graduate study progress and four administrative dimensions. Administrative approval and support was positively associated with progress (r = .274, p = .003); workload and ancillary assignments (r = .309, p = .001); scheduling and time accommodation (r = .260, p = .005); and study-leave and policy implementation (r = .185, p = .047). Information and coordination support was not significantly associated with progress (r = .177, p = .057).

| **Administrative dimension** | **r** | **p** | **Decision** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Administrative approval and support | 0.274 | 0.003 | Significant |
| Workload and ancillary assignments | 0.309 | 0.001 | Significant |
| Scheduling and time accommodation | 0.26 | 0.005 | Significant |
| Study-leave and policy implementation | 0.185 | 0.047 | Significant |
| Information and coordination support | 0.177 | 0.057 | Not significant |

For personal barriers, financial and commuting burdens (r = .201, p = .031) and physical and emotional fatigue (r = .250, p = .007) were significantly associated with progress. Family and caregiving responsibilities

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(r = .107, p = .255) and motivation and self-efficacy erosion (r = .042, p = .652) were not statistically significant.

| Personal dimension | r | p | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|
| Family and caregiving responsibilities | 0.107 | 0.255 | Not significant |
| Financial and commuting burdens | 0.201 | 0.031 | Significant |
| Physical and emotional fatigue | 0.25 | 0.007 | Significant |
| Motivation and self-efficacy erosion | 0.042 | 0.652 | Not significant |

## 4. DISCUSSION

The profile of the respondents reflects a sample of working teachers who were pursuing graduate education while established in their professional roles. The concentration of participants in the 26–45 age range, the predominance of Teacher III, and the high share seeking professional advancement suggest that graduate study was commonly pursued alongside ongoing teaching careers. More than half of respondents reported two years or less in graduate study, indicating that many were at an early stage of their graduate journey. These profile patterns provide context for interpreting the coexistence of professional obligations and academic progression.

Administrative barriers were rated low overall, but workload and ancillary assignments received the highest administrative mean. The item concerning school reports and documentation was rated moderate, as was difficulty securing approval for graduate activities. This pattern indicates that barriers may be concentrated in specific work demands or administrative transactions rather than uniformly experienced across all institutional conditions. A low composite score should not be taken to mean that administrative support is unnecessary; targeted improvements in workload allocation, advance planning, and request procedures may be relevant where particular items stand out.

Personal barriers were more pronounced than administrative barriers. Physical and emotional fatigue was the highest-rated dimension, with work-related stress interfering with concentration receiving the highest item score. Financial and commuting burdens were also moderate, particularly expenses associated with research, materials, and internet access. These results are consistent with the practical challenge of allocating time, energy, and resources to graduate study while continuing to teach. Family and caregiving demands were also present, especially unexpected family needs that disrupted planned academic activities. The findings point toward an integrated support response that addresses both well-being and practical access to graduate study.

The perceived progress findings showed moderate agreement for completion of requirements, achievement of milestones, and adherence to expected timelines, while overall progress received an agreement-level mean. This difference may indicate that respondents maintained a general sense of advancement even when the individual processes needed to reach completion—such as submitting outputs on time and achieving milestones—were less consistently experienced. Academic progress support may therefore benefit from clear milestones, advising, and realistic study plans rather than relying only on a general sense of progress.

The correlations require careful interpretation. Four administrative dimensions and two personal dimensions had statistically significant positive associations with progress. Since the barrier scale represents greater reported barriers at higher scores, a positive coefficient does not imply that barriers facilitate degree progress. The observed associations may reflect complex patterns in the measurement, respondents' awareness of both obstacles and progress, or other unmeasured conditions. They do not establish that the barriers caused or improved progress. The interpretation also depends on ensuring that composite score coding and correlation calculations were correctly specified. In particular, future reporting should verify item coding and consider presenting the direction of each construct in a way that makes the meaning of positive correlations transparent.

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The nonsignificant findings for information and coordination support, family and caregiving responsibilities, and motivation/self-efficacy erosion indicate that the analysis did not establish statistically significant associations for these dimensions in this sample. These results should not be interpreted as proof that the conditions are unimportant. Rather, they suggest that their relationships with perceived progress were not statistically demonstrated using the present measures and sample. Further studies may explore subgroup patterns, objective academic milestones, and contextual factors that could clarify these relationships.

**Implications and proposed action plan**

The findings informed an action plan focused on practical, coordinated support. Priority areas include: (1) wellness and fatigue-management activities with access to appropriate support services; (2) information on scholarships, grants, and potential assistance with graduate-study expenses; (3) workload mapping and equitable coordination of ancillary assignments; (4) advance coordination of school and graduate-school schedules; (5) clear information on administrative approval and study-leave procedures; and (6) periodic academic progress consultations and milestone tracking. Implementation may involve school heads, teachers, graduate institutions, district or division personnel, and relevant support offices. Strategies should remain consistent with existing policies and operational requirements.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Public school teachers in the study generally reported low administrative barriers and moderate personal barriers while pursuing graduate studies. Among administrative concerns, workload and ancillary assignments were most prominent; among personal concerns, physical and emotional fatigue and financial and commuting burdens were particularly salient. Respondents perceived moderate progress in completing requirements, achieving milestones, and following expected timelines, while overall progress was rated more favorably. Several administrative and personal dimensions were statistically associated with progress, but the positive correlations require cautious interpretation and cannot be understood as evidence that barriers improve progress. The findings support an action plan that combines administrative coordination with well-being, financial-information, and academic-monitoring strategies.

**Limitations and recommendations**

The findings should be considered in light of the study's descriptive-correlational design, self-reported measures, and sample of 116 teachers in selected settings in Cebu and Negros Provinces. The analysis does not establish causal relationships, and perceived progress may not correspond directly to verified completion records. The positive correlations between barrier ratings and progress warrant review of score coding, construct direction, and analytic assumptions before publication. Future research may use longitudinal designs, include objective indicators such as completed units or thesis milestones, compare teacher subgroups with appropriate tests, and examine whether support interventions are associated with changes in progress over time.

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