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Pre-Service Science Teachers' Internship Challenges in Masbate Secondary Schools: Their Role in Career Intention and Implications for Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

Teaching internships serve as a critical bridge between teacher education programs and classroom practice. However, pre-service teachers assigned to regional and resource-limited schools often encounter unique challenges that may shape their career trajectories. This narrative inquiry explored the internship-related challenges faced by pre-service science teachers in Masbate secondary schools, examined how these challenges influenced their intention to become science teachers, and drew implications for improving science teacher education programs.Using Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven pre-service science teachers who completed their teaching internships in Masbate secondary schools. Data were analyzed using a four-phase three-dimensional narrative framework (personal, social, temporal). Three major categories of challenges emerged: pedagogical and resource-related challenges (lack of laboratory equipment, frequent power interruptions, limited teaching aids), stakeholder-related challenges (student apathy, reading comprehension difficulties, variable mentor support), and contextual challenges (large class sizes, hybrid learning modalities, post-disaster infrastructure damage). Despite these difficulties, six of seven participants expressed continued intention to become science teachers, citing love of science, fulfillment from student learning, and mentor support as sustaining factors. One participant reconsidered the profession due to financial pressures and employment system concerns. Internship challenges do not automatically deter pre-service science teachers from the profession. Self-efficacy gained from overcoming challenges, passion for science, and supportive mentoring relationships play crucial protective roles. Systemic barriers, particularly employment corruption and financial instability, weakened career intention even when internships were successful.

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KEYWORDS:

Pre-service science teachers, Teaching internship challenges, Career intention, Narrative inquiry

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1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of science education fundamentally depends on the competence, commitment, and resilience of science teachers. In the Philippines, as in many developing countries, science education faces persistent challenges, including inadequate laboratory facilities, large class sizes, and limited access to technology (Department of Education [DepEd], 2019). These challenges become even more pronounced in regional and rural areas such as Masbate, where schools often contend with additional difficulties,

including frequent power interruptions, post-typhoon infrastructure damage, and a shortage of qualified mentors.

Pre-service science teachers—students enrolled in teacher education programs who are preparing to become science teachers—undergo teaching internships as a culminating experience that transforms theoretical knowledge into practical classroom competence. The teaching internship represents a critical period during which future teachers test their pedagogical skills, develop professional identity, and make consequential decisions about whether to enter the profession (Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Tran & Huynh, 2017).

However, the internship experience is not uniformly positive. Research has documented that pre-service teachers often face significant challenges, including heavy workloads, unsupportive mentors, student misbehavior, and mismatches between university training and school realities (Gao & Benson, 2012; Han & Damjanovic, 2014; Le, 2014). In regional schools, these challenges may be exacerbated by resource scarcity and contextual disadvantages (Dang & Boyd, 2014; Mukeredzi, 2016).

What remains less understood is how pre-service science teachers specifically experience and narrate these challenges, and how these narrated experiences shape their intention to become science teachers. Science teaching presents unique demands—such as laboratory experiments, scientific terminology, and inquiry-based methods—that may generate distinct challenges not faced by teachers of other subjects. Furthermore, the career intentions of pre-service science teachers are particularly consequential given the national shortage of qualified science educators in Philippine regional schools.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical perspectives. First, Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory posits that individuals' beliefs in their capability to execute specific tasks influence their persistence, effort, and career choices. Teaching internships serve as a primary source of mastery experiences, which are the most powerful source of self-efficacy. Internship challenges that are successfully overcome should enhance self-efficacy, while unresolved challenges may diminish it.

Second, Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory suggests that disorienting dilemmas, such as unexpected resource shortages, student apathy, or mentor criticism, can trigger perspective transformation. How pre-service teachers interpret and integrate these dilemmas shapes their professional identity and career decisions.

Third, Wenger's (2010) communities of practice framework conceptualizes teaching internship as legitimate peripheral participation in the professional community of teachers. The quality of mentorship and collegial interactions determines whether pre-service teachers feel welcomed into or excluded from this community. Together, these theories predict that internship challenges influence career intention through three mediating mechanisms: self-efficacy beliefs, transformative meaning-making, and perceived belonging to the teaching community

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the internship-related challenges faced by pre-service science teachers in Masbate secondary schools and how these challenges influence their career intention. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What challenges do pre-service science teachers encounter during their teaching internship in Masbate secondary schools?

RQ2: How do these internship challenges shape or relate to pre-service science teachers' intention to pursue a career in science teaching?

RQ3: What implications do these internships experiences hold for improving science teacher education programs?

RQ4: How do pre-service science teachers cope with internship-related challenges, and what factors mediate their career intention?

II. METHODS

This study employed narrative inquiry design (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry was selected because it privileges the chronological, contextual, and meaning-making dimensions of lived experience—precisely what this study sought to understand regarding how pre-service science teachers narrate their internship challenges and career intentions. Unlike case studies that describe a bounded system, narrative inquiry treats each participant's story as a coherent whole, attending to plot, turning points, and narrative identity.

Research Locale and Participants

The study was conducted at Dr. Emilio B. Espinosa Sr. Memorial State College of Agriculture and Technology (DEBESMSCAT) in Masbate province, Philippines. Participants were seven pre-service science teachers who completed their teaching internships in Masbate secondary schools. All participants were graduates of DEBESMSCAT's teacher education program. The sample size of seven is appropriate for narrative inquiry, which prioritizes depth of storytelling over statistical generalizability (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Riessman, 2008).

Participant selection criteria included completion of a full teaching internship of minimum ten weeks in a Masbate secondary school, graduation from a teacher education institution in Masbate province, and willingness to provide detailed written narrative responses.

Research Instrument

The research instrument was a semi-structured interview questionnaire consisting of 22 open-ended questions. The questionnaire was organized into five sections: (a) background and expectations, (b) specific internship challenges (pedagogical, resource-related, stakeholder-related, and contextual), (c) coping strategies and self-efficacy, (d) career intention and influencing factors, and (e) recommendations for teacher education programs. The instrument was developed based on research questions and reviewed by the research adviser for content validity and clarity.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected using the semi-structured interview questionnaire delivered via Google Form. Participants provided written responses to all open-ended questions, with an average response length of approximately 1,500–2,500 words per participant, yielding rich narrative data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in four phases. Phase 1 compiled each participant's responses into a coherent chronological narrative. Phase 2 identified recurring themes, metaphors, and turning points across all seven narratives. Phase 3 analyzed each narrative across three dimensions: personal (frustration, fulfillment, anxiety, and pride), social (interactions with mentors, students, peers, and family), and temporal (connections among past experiences, present challenges, and future intentions). Phase 4 synthesized common patterns and unique variations across participants.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, several strategies were employed. For credibility, member checking was conducted by returning the narrative portrait of each participant to them for verification; all seven confirmed accuracies. For transferability, thick description of participants, setting, and challenges is provided to enable readers to assess applicability to other contexts. For dependability, a detailed audit trail including raw responses, analysis notes, and reflexive journals was maintained. For confirmability, direct quotations are used extensively to ground findings in participant voices rather than researcher interpretation alone, and peer debriefing was conducted with two qualitative researchers not involved in the study.

Ethical Considerations.

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines for educational research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The study posed no risk to participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings of this narrative inquiry organized by research questions. Following narrative inquiry conventions, the chapter begins with brief narrative portraits of the seven participants, followed by cross-cutting thematic findings, and concludes with a summary of key results.

Narrative Portraits of the Participants

Participant 1 taught Earth and Space Science to Grade 7 students. They entered their internship expecting it to be a battleground where theories learned in college would be tested against reality. Their primary challenges included minimal use of laboratory equipment, frequent power interruptions, and students' poor reading comprehension. Despite these obstacles, Participant 1 discovered a powerful strategy: contextualization. When teaching about earthquakes, they connected the lesson to the recent movement of the Cataingan fault. Reflecting on this experience, they stated that by proper contextualization, they were able to get through almost every challenge. While Participant 1 finds teaching fulfilling, they expressed concern about the employment system, noting that having a backer often matters more than qualifications. They remain partially committed to becoming a science teacher.

Participant 2 taught Earth Science and Physics to Grade 9 students. They initially felt overwhelmed teaching at one of the biggest high schools in Masbate, aware that some students might be more knowledgeable than they were. Their challenges included creating lesson plans that served both higher-achieving and lower-achieving students and managing a compressed schedule due to classroom renovations. Participant 2 found confidence through content mastery, realizing that they are capable if they want to do their best. They described the rewarding ahhhh moment when students finally understood a concept. Participant 2 intends to become a science teacher.

Participant 3 taught Biology, Chemistry, and Physics to Grade 10 students. Student behavior was their primary challenge, along with lack of laboratory equipment. They maintained a confident approach, stating that they had rules during their practice teaching, and cited love for science as their primary motivation. Participant 3 intends to become a science teacher.

Participant 4 taught Physics to Grade 9 students. They entered expecting science teaching to be routed with different apparatuses and tools but found resources that were visible but not accessible. Their mentor was often busy, leaving them feeling independent and figuring out everything on their own. Participant 4 turned to do-it-yourself materials and limited experiments to what was

convenient. Their sustaining forces were family, peers, personal resilience, and faith. A powerful turning point occurred when a lower-section student told them, in the local dialect, that they had never experienced being able to learn science lessons without being afraid to solve problems. This moment solidified their desire to teach. Participant 4 intends to become a science teacher.

Participant 5 taught Physics to Grade 9 students. They faced difficulties with student comprehension and retention, but their most painful challenge came from other school personnel who spread gossiping false accusations about them. They criticized this unprofessionalism and failure to model the Code of Ethics for Teachers. Despite this, Participant 5 persevered, supported by their mentor, peers, family, and faith. Their career intention is driven partly by a childhood fascination with space, describing the feeling of wanting to go to the moon or beyond the sky. Participant 5 intends to become a science teacher.

Participant 6 taught Chemistry and Physics to Grade 10 students. Their internship was complicated by Typhoon Opong, which destroyed laboratory equipment, televisions, blackboards, and caused electricity outages. They described the situation as a mess. Despite catastrophic conditions, Participant 6 utilized a personal printer, borrowed a power station, and became resourceful in finding alternatives. Their mentor was described as amazing and held a doctoral degree. However, Participant 6 is the only participant who expressed uncertainty about becoming a science teacher, citing financial instability. They explained that they love science but, because their family is financially unstable, they need to earn income faster and more efficiently. They are considering applying their scientific knowledge to business.

Participant 7 taught Earth and Space Science to Grade 7 students. They described their internship as stressful yet fulfilling. Their challenges included a rejected lesson plan that was missing the affective domain, an extreme section of apathetic and disrespectful students, a hybrid schedule of two days face-to-face and three days modular, and large classes of 37 to 40 students. Participant 7, who admitted being short-tempered, learned to control themselves using reverse psychology and a dragon look. They also faced body-shaming comments from a teacher. Despite this, they became more confident through self-encouragement, mentor feedback, and students who told them they enjoyed and understood their lessons. Participant 7 intends to become a science teacher.

Cross-Cutting Thematic Findings

1. Internship Challenges

The analysis revealed three major categories of challenges. First, pedagogical and resource-related challenges were reported by all participants. These included lack of laboratory equipment, frequent power interruptions, limited access to teaching aids such as televisions and projectors, and compressed schedules due to facility damage. Second, stakeholder-related challenges included student apathy and disrespect, which six of seven participants reported, students' poor reading comprehension reported by five participants, variable mentor support ranging from excellent to minimally available, and unprofessional behavior from other school personnel reported by two participants. Third, contextual challenges included large class sizes of 37 to 40 students reported by four participants, hybrid learning modalities combining face-to-face and modular instruction reported by three participants, and post-disaster infrastructure damage following Typhoon Opong reported by one participant.

2. Career Intention

Six of the seven participants explicitly intend to become science teachers. The sole uncertain participant was Participant 6, who cited financial instability and the need to support their family as the primary reasons for reconsidering the profession. Notably, Participant 6 had the most catastrophic internship conditions due to typhoon destruction but also the most qualified mentor, who held a doctoral degree. Their uncertainty was driven by systemic financial factors rather than experiential internship difficulties. Among the six committed participants, key sustaining factors included love of science, fulfillment from student learning moments, mentor support, student affirmation, and childhood fascination with science. Participant 1 expressed partial commitment due to concerns about the employment backer system, noting that having connections often matters more than qualifications.

3. Implications for Teacher Education

Participants recommended several improvements to teacher education programs. These included hands-on laboratory training prior to internship, preparation for administrative tasks such as lesson plan formatting and grading systems, early field exposure through observations before full teaching internship, and coping skills development including emotional regulation and classroom management strategies.

4. Coping Strategies

In response to these challenges, participants employed multiple coping strategies. Participant 1 used contextualization of lessons to local examples. Participant 2 relied on content mastery as a confidence-building strategy. Participant 3 maintained strict classroom rules. Participant 4 created do-it-yourself materials and improvised experiments. Participant 5 drew on social support from family, peers, mentors, and faith. Participant 6 demonstrated resourcefulness by borrowing a power station and using personal equipment. Participant 7 used reverse psychology and nonverbal control techniques. Across participants, the most cited sustaining factors were love of science, fulfillment from student learning moments, mentor support, student affirmation, and childhood fascination with science.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This narrative inquiry found that pre-service science teachers in Masbate face significant internship challenges, including resource scarcity, power interruptions, student apathy, and heavy workloads. Despite these difficulties, six of seven participants intend to become science teachers. The key determinant of career intention was not the presence of challenges but whether participants successfully navigated them and constructed meaningful narratives of growth.

Self-efficacy gained through overcoming challenges, love for science, student affirmation, and mentor support emerged as protective factors. Systemic barriers, particularly employment corruption through the backer system and financial instability, weakened career intention even when internships were successful. These findings support a resilience-based model of pre-service teacher career intention, in which challenges are not inherently deterrents but become deterrents only when they exceed coping resources, when no mastery experience is achieved, or when systemic barriers override experiential success.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Teacher education institutions should provide early field exposure, hands-on lab training, administrative task preparation, and coping skills development. Internship coordinators and mentors should offer regular feedback, protect pre-service teachers from unprofessional colleagues, and conduct three-point narrative consultations. Policymakers should eliminate the "backer" system through transparent hiring, invest in disaster-resilient infrastructure with backup power, and ensure laboratory equipment is accessible and functional.

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VII. DISCLOSURE

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