

Lived Experiences of Teachers in the Implementation of the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

Curriculum reforms are intended to improve learning outcomes. However, it is the teachers who are directly affected by these changes and often encounter challenges in translating policy into practice. This study explored the lived experiences of senior high school teachers in implementing the Strengthened Senior High School (SHS) Curriculum. The study was conducted in a public senior high school in the Schools Division of Misamis Occidental during the school year 2025-2026. A qualitative design was used to capture lived experiences from the eight senior high school teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through a semi-structured interview guide and analyzed through Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Findings of the study yielded the following themes: curriculum design and resource constraints; institutional gaps in curriculum implementation; impacts on teachers' professional performance and teaching-learning outcomes; instructional adaptation and collaborative learning engagement. The study concludes that the strengthened SHS curriculum faces major implementation challenges due to misalignment, resource constraints, and institutional gaps, and that stronger systemic support and teacher development are required. The study recommends strengthening curriculum implementation by enhancing school-level support, collaboration, and teachers' continuous professional development.

Keywords: coping strategies, curriculum challenges, instructional adaptation, streamline curriculum, teacher experiences

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

In the context of Philippine basic education, continuous curriculum improvement is vital to ensure that learning remains relevant, responsive, and future-oriented. As the country faces rapid technological, labor, and societal changes, the curriculum must evolve to equip learners with essential 21st-century skills. Regular updates enable the integration of innovative pedagogies, the inclusion of diverse learner needs, and alignment with national education goals, such as those outlined in the K to 12 curriculum. However, while curriculum reforms intend to improve learning outcomes, the implementation phase remains the most critical and challenging stage. Teachers, as frontline implementers, are directly affected by these changes and often struggle to translate policy into practice.

Under the MATATAG Agenda of the Department of Education, curriculum reform has taken the form of a deliberate shift toward a streamlined, learner-centered, and competency-focused Enhanced K–12 Curriculum. This shift manifested through the Enhanced Curriculum for Grades 1–10 and the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum for Grades 11–12, both of which aim to address long-standing issues of curriculum congestion, misalignment, and instructional overload.

The Strengthened Senior High School (SHS) Curriculum, introduced through DepEd Memorandum No. 048, s. 2025, is a major reform under the MATATAG agenda aimed at improving the quality, relevance, and efficiency of senior high school education in the Philippines. This curriculum was developed in response to

feedback on the original SHS program implemented in 2016, which faced issues of curriculum overload and misalignment with higher education and industry needs. Its key features include a streamlined structure that reduces the number of core subjects from 15 per semester to 5 per year, allowing deeper mastery of essential competencies. The program replaces rigid strands with elective clusters, giving learners flexibility through the “doorway option” to choose subjects aligned with their preferred exit, whether college, employment, or entrepreneurship. It consolidates tracks into Academic and TechPro, integrates Arts and Sports electives under the Academic track, and emphasizes industry-readiness and lifelong learning through stackable credentials. The pilot implementation in SY 2025–2026 aims to refine strategies before nationwide rollout, ensuring the curriculum is responsive, efficient, and future-oriented (Department of Education, 2025).

The original Senior High School (SHS) curriculum, implemented in 2016 under the K to 12 Basic Education Program, was structured around four academic tracks: Academic, Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL), Sports, and Arts and Design. Within the Academic track, students chose strands such as STEM, ABM, HUMSS, and the General Academic Strand (GAS). Each strand included a combination of core, applied, and specialized subjects, totaling up to 31 subjects over two years of SHS.

While the intent was to provide a broad and flexible education, the curriculum quickly became overloaded, with students and teachers reporting difficulties in managing the volume of content. Many subjects contained redundant competencies, particularly across strands and tracks, leading to inefficient instruction and diluted learning outcomes. Teachers were often burdened with preparing for multiple subjects, while students struggled to retain and apply knowledge across overlapping topics (Department of Education, 2025)

This structure prompted widespread feedback from educators, students, and stakeholders, underscoring the need for a more focused, streamlined curriculum. In response, DepEd initiated a comprehensive review and redesign, resulting in the Strengthened SHS Curriculum. The revised curriculum aims to reduce subject overload, eliminate redundancy, and improve alignment with higher education and industry requirements. Through DepEd Memorandum No. 048, s. 2025, the pilot implementation of the strengthened curriculum was launched to test its effectiveness in selected schools before nationwide rollout.

Another program of the Department of Education is the implementation of the Enhanced Curriculum for Grades 1 to 10. It was introduced as a major reform in Philippine basic education to address persistent issues in the K to 12 program, such as congested content, insufficient instructional time, and misaligned prerequisite skills (Diquito, 2024; Estrellado, 2024). Diquito (2024) emphasized that the revised science curriculum incorporates technology and engineering literacy and integrates theoretical foundations and innovative teaching approaches, aligning competencies with 21st-century skills and global demands, including Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0. Similarly, Estrellado (2024) noted that the Revised K-12 Curriculum seeks to address challenges posed by misplaced learning competencies and social inequities, ensuring a more balanced and responsive framework for learners.

Unlike the original K–12 curriculum implemented in 2016, which emphasized breadth through numerous core, applied, and specialized subjects, the Enhanced K–12 and Strengthened SHS Curriculum prioritize depth, coherence, and alignment. The earlier curriculum structure led to overlapping competencies, repetitive content, and limited instructional time, prompting widespread feedback from teachers and learners. In contrast, the revised curriculum under MATATAG seeks to reduce subject overload, rationalize competencies, and allow teachers and students more time for mastery and meaningful learning.

As teachers move from the traditional K–12 framework to the Enhanced K–12 and Strengthened SHS Curriculum, they are not merely adjusting content; they must recalibrate their instructional practices, assessment strategies, resource use, and professional identities. This transition places teachers at the core of curriculum reform, making their experiences critical to understanding whether the reform translates successfully into classroom practice.

Padillo et al. (2021) emphasized that teachers play a pivotal role in curriculum implementation, yet challenges such as inadequate training, limited resources, and resistance to change hinder successful rollout, underscoring the need for sustained professional development and institutional support to better prepare

educators for the demands of the new curriculum (Padillo, 2021). Complementing these practical concerns, Abenes and Esperancilla (2025) explored the philosophical foundations of the Revised K–12 Curriculum, highlighting its alignment with Biesta’s educational telos and its promotion of holistic development through an emphasis on foundational skills, values education, cultural consciousness, and inclusivity. They argued that the curriculum not only equips learners for economic success but also fosters active participation in a democratic society, with its focus on nationalism and cultural reclamation serving as a counter-narrative to globalization while preserving Filipino heritage and enhancing global competitiveness (Abenes & Esperancilla, 2025).

Collectively, these studies affirm that the Revised K-12 Curriculum represents a transformative step toward improving educational quality and relevance in the Philippines. However, its success depends on addressing implementation challenges through collaborative efforts among policymakers, educators, and stakeholders, ensuring that reforms translate into meaningful learning experiences for all students (Padillo et al., 2021; Abenes & Esperancilla, 2025).

Studies on curriculum implementation consistently highlight persistent challenges that hinder the effective translation of educational reforms into classroom practice. Kilag et al. (2024) identified significant barriers in the Philippine Revised K–12 Curriculum, including teacher readiness issues, inadequate infrastructure, policy gaps, and equity concerns, emphasizing that successful implementation requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach supported by continuous professional development, sufficient resource allocation, and inclusive practices (Kilag et al., 2024).

Similarly, Karakus (2021) found that effective curriculum implementation depends on alignment between intended curriculum goals and classroom practices; however, teachers often modify or omit prescribed content due to heavy workloads, time constraints, and a need to prioritize meaningful learning experiences. Additional concerns include overly repetitive and overloaded content, unclear guidelines, and limited flexibility in adapting lessons to students’ prior knowledge (Karakus, 2021). Extending these findings to an international context, Zandrato and Agatha (2023) reported that while educators were able to adopt student-centered approaches such as Problem-Based Learning and Project-Based Learning under Indonesia’s MBKM curriculum, they encountered challenges related to the curriculum’s novelty, unclear implementation guidelines, and difficulties in assessment practices. Despite recognizing the benefits of increased student autonomy and engagement, educators emphasized the need for greater adaptability, sustained training, and institutional support (Zandrato & Agatha, 2023). Collectively, these studies underscore that curriculum reforms, whether local or global, require clear and flexible frameworks, adequate resources, continuous teacher development, and strong collaboration among stakeholders to address implementation challenges and enhance instructional effectiveness (Kilag et al., 2024; Karakus, 2021; Zandrato & Agatha, 2023).

Findings from various studies have highlighted both the strengths and challenges of past curricula. In terms of student outcomes, while the K to 12 program was praised for its potential to enhance college readiness and equip learners with 21st-century skills, concerns were raised about its actual impact on academic performance and employability. Some students acknowledged that the program helped them gain more knowledge and skills, particularly in subjects like mathematics and science. However, others admitted that their academic performance was better under the previous curriculum, citing the overwhelming number of subjects and the lack of depth in content delivery (Igcasama, 2021).

From the teachers' perspective, several challenges were consistently reported. These included increased workload, insufficient training, and difficulties in classroom management due to the complexity and breadth of the curriculum. Teachers implementing the Spiral Curriculum in Science and Mathematics, for instance, faced issues such as insufficient educational resources, limited capacity for technological development, congested curricula, and low student performance (Usman-Kaibat et al., 2025). Many educators had to rely on personal funds, contextualized materials, and differentiated instruction to meet the demands of the curriculum.

Further, Degorio (2022) noted that science teachers struggled with the misalignment of content in the spiral progression approach, which hindered effective teaching. Tirol (2022) emphasized that both teachers and students found the spiral curriculum challenging, especially when students advanced to higher levels without

mastering foundational concepts. Teachers expressed the need for more time, targeted training, and remedial support to address learning gaps and improve instructional delivery (Degorio, 2022).

Teachers consistently face significant challenges in implementing new curricula, often stemming from both technical and adaptive demands. Pak et al. (2020), as cited by Xhemajli et al. (2025), found that most strategies for curriculum implementation focused on technical compliance rather than addressing adaptive challenges such as shifting instructional practices and meeting diverse learner needs. Teachers reported difficulties aligning instruction with new standards, managing increased workloads, and adapting to unfamiliar pedagogical approaches, which frequently led to stress and resistance to change. The study emphasizes that successful curriculum implementation requires both technical and adaptive leadership, as providing materials and guidelines alone does not resolve deeper issues related to teacher capacity and instructional change (Pak et al., 2020; Xhemajli et al., 2025).

Similarly, Dursun and Aykan (2025) and Xhemajli et al. (2025) highlight recurring obstacles, including intensive curricular demands, limited resources, low motivation, and insufficient parental support. Teachers noted that syllabi and textbooks remain overly theoretical and focused on knowledge rather than skill development, creating a disconnect between curriculum goals and instructional materials. While training programs help teachers adapt, these efforts are often insufficient, as educators require continuous professional development and a shift in mindset toward innovative methodologies. These studies underscore that curriculum reforms pose complex adaptive challenges for teachers, necessitating structural adjustments, sustained professional development, resource provision, and collaborative problem-solving (Dursun & Aykan, 2025; Xhemajli et al., 2025).

This study was conducted in one of the National High Schools in Calamba District, Misamis Occidental Division, which is one of the five schools in the Division of Misamis Occidental that are pilot implementers of the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum under DepEd Memorandum No. 048, s. 2025. The school offers both Academic and Technical-Vocational tracks and caters to a diverse population of learners. With limited resources and a high student-teacher ratio, the school faces unique challenges in adapting to curriculum reforms, particularly in ensuring adequate instructional materials and teacher training. These contextual realities make the school an ideal setting for examining how teachers navigate the complexities of implementing the strengthened senior high school curriculum, providing insights that can inform policy and practice at both local and national levels.

Following Miles' (2017) taxonomy of research gaps, this study addresses an evidence gap, a practical-knowledge gap, and an empirical gap. While previous research has explored teacher challenges in implementing various curricula, there is limited empirical evidence on how Filipino teachers experience the pilot implementation of the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum. This gap is critical because the strengthened curriculum introduces structural and pedagogical changes that differ significantly from previous reforms. Additionally, a practical knowledge gap persists between the curriculum's intended goals, such as streamlined competencies and industry alignment, and the realities teachers face in resource-constrained classrooms. By employing a case study approach to capture teachers' lived experiences, this research aims to generate localized insights that inform policy and practice, bridging the disconnect between reform design and on-the-ground implementation.

The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of senior high school teachers in the pilot implementation of the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum. It aims to understand how these challenges affect teaching practices and the overall learning process, and to identify the coping strategies teachers employ to adapt to curriculum changes. Through this inquiry, the study seeks to provide evidence-based insights that can inform policy and practice in the context of educational reform.

This research is significant for multiple stakeholders in the education sector. Teachers benefit from the findings as these insights can guide the development of targeted professional development programs and support systems that address their specific needs during curriculum transitions. School administrators and policymakers gain valuable information to improve implementation strategies, allocate resources effectively, and design

monitoring mechanisms that ensure curriculum fidelity. Learners and parents indirectly benefit as improved teacher preparedness and support lead to better instructional quality and learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the academic community by enriching the literature on curriculum implementation in the Philippine context, which remains underexplored compared to global studies. The research output can be used by DepEd and educational institutions to refine the Strengthened SHS Curriculum, enhance teacher-training modules, and inform future policy decisions. It can also serve as a reference for subsequent studies on educational reform, ensuring that curriculum changes are responsive to classroom realities and sustainable in practice.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two complementary theories: Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens for understanding how teachers experience, interpret, and respond to the challenges posed by the implementation of the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum.

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping explains stress as a dynamic interaction between individuals and their environment. Stress arises through primary appraisal (evaluating whether a situation is threatening or challenging) and secondary appraisal (evaluating one's resources to cope). Teachers facing curriculum overload, limited materials, time constraints, new documentation requirements, and insufficient training undergo these appraisals continuously.

In the context of implementing the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum, this theory provides a lens to understand how teachers navigate the multiple stressors inherent in curriculum reform. These demands constitute environmental stressors that teachers must appraise: some may be perceived as manageable challenges, while others may be appraised as threats. In this study, the theory helps explain how teachers interpret curriculum demands, why certain challenges trigger stress, and how coping strategies emerge. The model clarifies that teachers' adaptive practices are not random but are cognitive and behavioral responses to perceived environmental demands.

Recent studies affirm the relevance of this model in understanding teacher stress. Savage & Woloshyn (2022) used the model to examine stress and coping among K–12 educators, finding that maladaptive coping increased distress while adaptive coping improved well-being. Similarly, Ghasemi, Herman, and Reinke (2023) applied the model to analyze teachers' coping mechanisms during the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing that functional coping strategies significantly reduced anxiety and stress. More recently, Singh & Singh (2026) showed that teachers' coping strategies predict psychological well-being and social adjustment, supporting the theory's emphasis on coping as a determinant of outcomes. These studies demonstrate the model's strong applicability in examining how teachers navigate stressors within educational reforms.

Complementing Lazarus and Folkman's theory is Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which situates teachers' experiences within multiple layers of environmental influence. The theory posits that individuals exist within nested systems, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem, all of which shape behavior and experiences. In the context of education, this perspective highlights how teachers' practices and well-being are not only shaped by classroom interactions but also by institutional policies, community expectations, and broader societal norms. Thus, understanding these interconnected systems provides a more comprehensive view of the challenges and supports that influence teachers' professional lives and responses to educational change.

In the context of curriculum implementation, teachers' experiences are influenced by multiple layers: classroom conditions and student needs (microsystem), collaboration with colleagues and school leadership (mesosystem), division-level decisions and training availability (exosystem), national policies and cultural expectations (macrosystem), and the timeline of curriculum reform (chronosystem). In this study, the theory provides a structural explanation for why teachers face multi-layered challenges and highlights that curriculum implementation is not merely an instructional task but a systemic process shaped by environmental interactions.

A 2024 review by Tong & An (2024) found that Bronfenbrenner's theory is widely applied in education research to explain how environmental systems influence learning and professional practice. Lenhoff, Singer, & Gottfried (2022) applied ecological systems thinking to educational policy, emphasizing that school outcomes are shaped by broader structural and environmental systems rather than just classroom-level factors. In 2025, Rahman (2025) used the ecological framework to study learning motivation and resilience, demonstrating how multi-level influences shape educational processes.

Together, the two theories offer a powerful combined framework. The Transactional Model captures teachers' cognitive and emotional responses to curriculum demands, while Ecological Systems Theory explains the structural, contextual, and institutional forces that shape those demands. By integrating these frameworks, this study recognizes that teachers' stress, coping, adaptation, and performance emerge from both personal appraisals and multi-layered systemic influences. This dual-theoretical approach enables a deeper and more holistic understanding of teachers' lived experiences with the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum.

Conceptual Framework

This case study was able to identify the following themes: curriculum design, resource constraints, institutional gaps in curriculum implementation, impacts on teachers' performance and teaching-learning outcomes, instructional adaptation, and collaborative learning engagement.

Curriculum Design and Resource Constraints. Challenges in curriculum design and instructional alignment commonly arise when competencies, learning standards, and instructional materials are not clearly aligned, making it difficult to translate curriculum intentions into classroom practice. Research shows that misalignment between curriculum standards and actual instructional tasks often results in cognitive overload, unclear expectations, and inconsistent implementation across classrooms (Zhao et al., 2023). Studies further indicate that many senior high school curricula remain overloaded or repetitive, causing teachers to struggle with pacing, unpacking competencies, and adapting lessons within limited timeframes (Veliganio et al., 2024). These findings emphasize that curriculum quality depends not only on well structured standards but also on clarity, coherence, and realistic instructional timelines.

International evidence consistently identifies insufficient instructional resources, inadequate facilities, and contextual mismatches as major barriers to effective curriculum implementation. The ACTRC SHS Curriculum Review (2025) reported significant inequalities in access to learning materials, ICT resources, and functional classroom facilities, noting that these disparities undermine instructional consistency across schools. Likewise, research on senior high school implementation found that teachers face persistent shortages of aligned materials and must often modify or create resources themselves, contributing to increased workload and fragmented implementation (Veliganio et al., 2024). These studies highlight how material and contextual constraints shape teachers' instructional capacities and influence curriculum fidelity.

Institutional Gaps in Curriculum Implementation. Recent scholarship shows that curriculum reforms frequently encounter systemic barriers, such as weak rollout planning, insufficient training, and inconsistent administrative support, that hinder school-level implementation. Studies on MATATAG and related reforms reveal that inadequate preparation and policy coherence contribute to confusion, uneven implementation, and increased burden on teachers (Herrera, 2025). Ceremonia-Cerda (2024) similarly found that curriculum changes often outpace institutional readiness, resulting in gaps in material delivery, documentation systems, and administrative guidance. These findings reinforce that curriculum success relies heavily on sustained institutional leadership, structured support systems, and coordinated implementation strategies.

Impacts on Teachers' Performance and Teaching-Learning Outcomes. Literature widely documents that curriculum reforms intensify teacher workload, emotional pressure, and professional uncertainty, thereby directly affecting performance and well-being. Studies show that inadequate training, insufficient materials, and heightened administrative demands contribute to teacher stress, reduced confidence, and burnout (Daily Guardian, 2025). Research by Ignacio & Bajet (2025) also indicates that misaligned curriculum expectations strain teachers' capacity to meet learner needs, thereby affecting job satisfaction and instructional quality. These

insights affirm that teacher well-being is deeply intertwined with the structural and instructional demands placed upon them.

Studies consistently show that misaligned curriculum materials, insufficient time, and inadequate resources negatively influence lesson delivery, learning depth, and student engagement. Research indicates that overloaded or unclear curricula lead to rushed lessons and superficial mastery, limiting opportunities for meaningful learning (Ceremonia Cerda, 2024). Large class sizes and inadequate materials further exacerbate learning gaps, especially for low-performing students who require individualized support (Ignacio & Bajet, 2025). Student engagement also declines when lessons are overly difficult or insufficiently contextualized, reinforcing the need for supportive structures that enable deeper, more interactive learning experiences.

Instructional Adaptation and Collaborative Learning Engagement. Teachers’ adaptive strategies, such as modifying materials, simplifying competencies, and leveraging technology, are well-documented responses to curriculum pressures. Gürhan (2026) found that curriculum adaptation is a routine, workload mediated response as teachers reconcile structural constraints with classroom demands, often by reprioritizing content, redesigning tasks, or integrating alternative resources. Research also shows that adaptive teaching strengthens instructional responsiveness and helps bridge gaps between curriculum expectations and learner needs, particularly during reform transitions (Wildan et al., 2026). These studies underscore that teacher agency and resourcefulness are essential to maintaining instructional continuity.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) and collaborative networks are widely recognized as critical mechanisms for supporting teachers during curriculum reforms. Hendrickx et al. (2025) found that PLCs foster open communication, reflective dialogue, and co-constructed knowledge, all of which enhance teacher learning and instructional improvement. Similarly, Lemesaya (2026) reported that collaborative environments strengthen professional identity, support culturally responsive pedagogy, and promote inquiry-based learning within schools. Additional studies show that teacher collaboration increases self-efficacy and drives innovation, including technology adoption (Liu et al., 2026). Together, these findings emphasize that collaboration is central to teacher resilience and effective curriculum implementation.

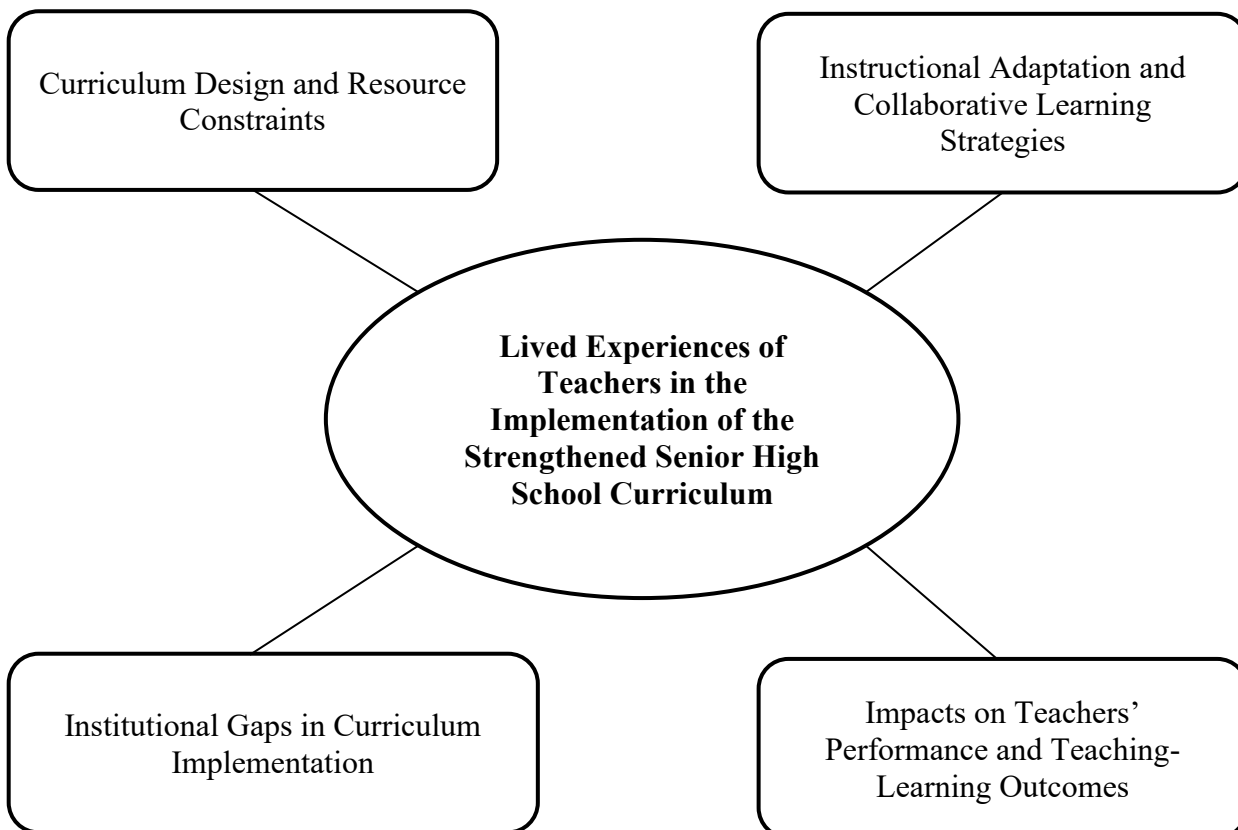


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of the Study

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the lived experiences of teachers in the implementation of the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum in one of the national high schools in the district of Calamba, Schools Division of Misamis Occidental, during the school year 2025 – 2026, and how these experiences influence their teaching practices and coping strategies. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What challenges do senior high school teachers face in the implementation of the strengthened senior high school curriculum?
2. Why do these challenges occur in the context of curriculum implementation at the classroom level?
3. How do these challenges affect teachers' performance and the overall teaching-learning process?
4. What strategies or coping mechanisms do teachers employ to address the challenges encountered in implementing the strengthened curriculum?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The qualitative research design is used in the study. Qualitative research focuses on exploring and understanding individuals' lived experiences, perspectives, and meanings within their natural settings. It is particularly appropriate for investigating complex educational phenomena, as it allows researchers to gain in-depth insight into participants' experiences and the context in which these occur (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Furthermore, qualitative research allows for the identification of patterns and themes that reflect both individual and shared experiences among participants (Aspers & Corte, 2021). The use of a qualitative research design is appropriate for this study because it enables the researcher to explore in depth the lived experiences of teachers in implementing the strengthened Senior High School curriculum. Through this design, the researcher gains meaningful insights into teachers' lived experiences, perceptions, and the contextual factors that influence curriculum implementation, thereby providing a rich, holistic understanding of the issue under investigation.

Setting

This study was conducted in one of the National High Schools in Calamba District, Misamis Occidental Division, which is one of the five schools in the Division of Misamis Occidental that are pilot implementers of the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum. It is considered a large rural school with an enrollment of over 1,500 students, of which 658 are enrolled in the senior high school. The school offers both Academic and Technical-Vocational tracks and caters to a diverse population of learners. With limited resources and a high student-teacher ratio, the school faces unique challenges in adapting to curriculum reforms, particularly in ensuring adequate instructional materials and teacher training. These contextual realities make the school an ideal setting for examining how teachers navigate the complexities of implementing the strengthened senior high school curriculum, providing insights that can inform policy and practice at both local and national levels.

Participants

Participants in this study were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The target number of participants was ten (10) senior high school teachers who were directly involved in the implementation of the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum. The final number of participants, however, was eight (8) senior high school teachers determined by data saturation, which was achieved when no new themes, insights, or relevant information emerged from subsequent interviews.

To ensure that participants can provide rich, relevant, and meaningful data, the following inclusion criteria were established: 1) teachers who are currently teaching in the Senior High School program at the time of data collection; 2) participants must have at least one (1) semester of experience implementing the

strengthened SHS curriculum; 3) participants must be officially employed in the selected school at the time of data collection; 4) participants must voluntarily agree to take part in the study and provide informed consent.

Instrument

The following was the research instrument used in gathering the data:

Semi-structured interview guide. This tool was designed to collect in-depth qualitative data from teachers regarding their experiences and challenges in implementing the strengthened Senior High School curriculum. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to ask predetermined questions while providing the flexibility to probe further based on participants' responses, enabling a deeper understanding of their perspectives.

The interview guide included open-ended questions covering key areas, including participants' understanding of the curriculum, teaching and learning resources, instructional strategies, assessment and evaluation, administrative and technical support, and coping strategies and recommendations. This instrument ensured that relevant information was systematically gathered while allowing participants to express their thoughts and share real-life experiences freely.

Before the actual interviews, the guide is reviewed by education experts for content validity and pilot-tested with a small group of teachers not included in the main study to ensure the clarity and appropriateness of the questions. With participants' informed consent, the researcher personally conducted interviews, recorded them, and transcribed them for accurate analysis. The data collected with this instrument were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to challenges encountered in curriculum implementation.

Data – Gathering Procedure

Before gathering the data, the researcher sought formal permission from the Dean of the Graduate School of Misamis University and the Schools Division Superintendent of Misamis Occidental to conduct the study. After approval, the researcher obtained authorization from the School Principal of the selected Senior High School to administer the survey and conduct interviews with the identified participants.

The primary method of data collection for this study was semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted face-to-face within the school premises to ensure accessibility, comfort, and minimal disruption to the participants' professional responsibilities. Each interview was expected to last approximately 25 to 40 minutes, allowing sufficient time for in-depth discussion of participants' experiences, challenges, and coping strategies related to the implementation of the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum.

Prior to the interview, participants were provided with an informed consent form that clearly explained the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, the voluntary nature of participation, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or negative consequence. The researcher personally administered the research instruments and retrieved them immediately after completion to ensure data accuracy and integrity.

With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate capture of their responses. The researcher also took supplementary field notes during and after each interview to document key points, observations, and non-verbal cues relevant to the study.

To maintain the confidentiality of the collected data, all responses were kept strictly anonymous and did not contain any identifying information. Audio recordings, transcripts, and interview notes were securely stored in a locked file cabinet and in a password-protected electronic folder accessible only to the researcher. The data gathered was used solely for academic purposes and was retained for a period of (6) six months, after which all physical and electronic files were permanently deleted or properly destroyed in accordance with ethical research standards.

Ethical Considerations

The paper had undergone review and approval by the MU-Research Ethics Committee before the study was conducted. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary, and respondents were informed that they would not be subjected to any form of physical, psychological, or professional harm as a result of their involvement.

To respect the dignity, time, and professional responsibilities of the participants, all interviews were scheduled beyond office hours or at a time most convenient for the participants, as mutually agreed upon by the researcher and the teacher-participants.

Moreover, participants were provided with clear and comprehensive information about the study's purpose, scope, and procedures. Deception, exaggeration, or misrepresentation of the study's aims, objectives, and expected outcomes were strictly avoided. Any institutional affiliations, sources of funding, or potential conflicts of interest were disclosed to ensure transparency and integrity in the research process.

The study guaranteed an acceptable level of confidentiality and anonymity. No identifying information appears in any transcripts, reports, or publications. All data were accessible only to the researcher and were securely stored in password-protected electronic files and locked physical storage.

As a token of appreciation for their time and valuable contributions, participants were provided with a small gift that was not of such value as to unduly influence or coerce their decision to participate.

All participants were asked to sign an Informed Consent Form as proof of their voluntary participation. They were clearly informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or negative consequences. Research data were retained securely and properly discarded six (6) months after the research findings were presented to the Thesis Committee, in accordance with ethical research standards.

Data Analysis

This study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis, a systematic and flexible method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This approach is appropriate for the study, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of teachers' experiences while ensuring a rigorous, transparent analytical process. The analysis followed the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke, enabling the researcher to move iteratively between data familiarization, coding, and theme development to ensure that findings were grounded in participants' perspectives.

Phase 1 is the familiarization with data. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness of participants' responses. The researcher carefully reviewed each transcript while listening to the audio recordings to verify correctness and remove identifying information, thereby maintaining participant anonymity. During this phase, the researcher immersed themselves in the data by repeatedly reading the transcripts and taking initial notes to gain a deep understanding of the content and context of participants' responses (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Konstantinos, 2024).

Phase 2 is generating the initial codes. After familiarization, the researcher conducted systematic coding by examining the transcripts line by line and identifying meaningful segments related to the research questions. Each transcript was labeled using codes (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8) to ensure confidentiality and organization. Initial codes were assigned to significant statements, phrases, and ideas that reflected teachers' experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. This phase enabled the researcher to organize the data into manageable, meaningful units for further analysis (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Phase 3 is the search for themes. The initial codes were then reviewed and grouped into broader categories based on similarities and patterns. The researcher examined how different codes could be combined to form overarching themes that captured recurrent ideas across participants. These candidate themes represented significant aspects of teachers' experiences in implementing the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum.

This step involved organizing codes into potential themes and identifying relationships among them (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Konstantinos, 2024).

Phase 4 is reviewing the themes. In this phase, the researcher refined and evaluated the preliminary themes to ensure they accurately represented the data. Each theme was checked against the coded extracts and the entire dataset to determine coherence and consistency. Themes that lacked sufficient supporting data were revised, combined, or discarded. This iterative review ensured that the themes reflected a valid and comprehensive representation of participants' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Konstantinos, 2024).

Phase 5 involves defining and naming themes. The refined themes were then clearly defined and named to capture their essence and meaning. The researcher developed detailed descriptions for each theme, explaining how they relate to the research questions and the overall phenomenon under investigation. At this stage, sub-themes were also identified where necessary to provide a more nuanced understanding of specific aspects of teachers' experiences (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Phase 6 is producing the report. The final phase involved synthesizing the themes into a coherent and meaningful narrative that addresses the study's objectives. The researcher integrated the findings into a structured report, presenting each theme with supporting evidence from participants' responses. Direct quotations were included to preserve the authenticity of teachers' voices and to illustrate key points. Field notes and observations were also used to support data interpretation and enhance the credibility of the findings through triangulation.

Throughout the analysis, the researcher maintained a systematic and transparent process, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in the data. The use of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis enhanced the rigor, trustworthiness, and depth of the study by providing a clear analytical framework for examining teachers' lived experiences in implementing the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study explored the challenges senior high school teachers face in implementing the strengthened senior high school curriculum. 8 teachers participated in the study. The demographic profile of the participants is as follows: 4 male and 4 female teachers; ages ranged from 28 to 55 years, with an average of 36.38 years; and length of service ranged from 7 months to 15 years, with an average of approximately 5.57 years.

The study yielded the following themes: curriculum design and resource constraints; institutional gaps in curriculum implementation; impacts on teachers' professional performance and teaching-learning outcomes; and instructional adaptation and collaborative learning engagement.

Curriculum Design and Resource Constraints

Teachers encounter interconnected challenges when the intended curriculum does not align with classroom realities and when essential resources are insufficient or inaccessible. The design of the strengthened Senior High School curriculum, particularly its competencies, pacing, and instructional expectations, often exceeds what can realistically be achieved within limited instructional time and diverse classroom contexts. Teachers are placed in a position where they must constantly reconcile curriculum requirements with learners' needs, available materials, and institutional limitations. This underscores that curriculum effectiveness is not solely dependent on content design but also on its practical feasibility and the adequacy of supporting resources. When these elements are misaligned, teachers experience increased workload, instructional difficulty, and compromised teaching-learning outcomes. Thus, this illustrates that successful curriculum implementation requires both well-structured design and sufficient resource support to ensure meaningful and attainable learning experiences.

Based on the interviews with the study participants, they claimed several issues related to overly broad competencies, misalignment between content and learning objectives, time constraints, and the difficulty of addressing diverse learner needs. They also highlighted external factors, including insufficient teaching

materials, limited facilities, poor alignment of instructional resources, limited access to technology, and administrative inefficiencies. The following subthemes surfaced from participants' narratives: curriculum design and instructional alignment challenges; resource, contextual, and implementation constraints.

Curriculum Design and Instructional Alignment Challenges. This reflects the difficulties teachers experience in aligning curriculum content, competencies, and instructional delivery within a limited time and diverse classroom contexts. Despite the curriculum's intention to streamline competencies, teachers reported that competencies remain excessively broad, mismatched with content, and difficult to deliver within the one hour instructional period. This misalignment reflects a deeper issue in curriculum design: intended learning outcomes do not fully align with the practical realities of classroom delivery. Alignment problems have been widely recognized in global curriculum studies: Zhao, Zhao, and Li (2023) note that instruction, assessment, and curriculum standards often lack congruence, leading to cognitive and pacing mismatches in classroom implementation. Similarly, recent Philippine research identifies challenges in implementing the SHS curriculum, arising from unclear guidelines, overly broad competencies, and limited teacher preparation (Veliganio et al., 2026). Against this backdrop, the teachers in this study highlight how curriculum design issues translate into everyday instructional difficulties.

Teachers reported that competencies are often broad, excessive, and not aligned with content, making them difficult to deliver effectively. Participant 1's first statement suggests a lack of coherence between the prescribed competencies and the instructional content, which may confuse both teachers and learners about lesson goals and assessment focus. Teachers may struggle to ensure that classroom activities truly address the intended competencies. The participants' second statement indicates that the competencies are unrealistic in scope, given time limitations, making full attainment within a single session impractical. Teachers may be forced to rush lessons or sacrifice depth to meet curriculum demands. Meanwhile, Participant 6 echoed that competencies must be "*unpacked*" before they can be taught. This implies that competencies are written at a high or abstract level, requiring teachers to break them down into smaller, teachable objectives before instruction. Additional planning time and effort are needed to translate competencies into concrete classroom activities. Participant 4 described competencies as "*very different and broad compared to the previous curriculum,*" reflecting difficulty interpreting what mastery should look like. This suggests that the current curriculum introduces wider and more complex expectations, which time, resources, or training may not adequately support. Teachers experienced adjustment difficulties and increased instructional load. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

"The content does not always match the learning competencies." (P1)

"Some competencies are too broad and numerous and complex to be achieved within a one-hour class period." (P1)

"Sometimes the competency is too broad, that's why you need to unpack it." (P6)

"The competencies themselves are very different and broad compared to the previous curriculum." (P4)

These statements indicate a structural gap between curriculum intent and instructional feasibility. This implies that the current learning competencies are broad, complex, and sometimes misaligned with instructional content, making them difficult to implement effectively within limited class time. As a result, teachers must invest additional effort in unpacking competencies and adapting lessons, which may affect instructional efficiency and the depth of student learning.

Research supports this disconnect. Argate et al. (2024) found that teachers experience difficulty teaching new SHS subjects due to unfamiliar or overly wide competency expectations, especially in the absence of clear learning standards. Likewise, Zhao et al. (2023) concluded that instructional tasks often place higher cognitive demands than curriculum documents specify, resulting in an inherent mismatch between prescribed and taught content. These findings parallel participants' experiences, demonstrating that misalignment complicates lesson planning and compromises the clarity of instructional goals.

Teachers also emphasized that insufficient time allocation constrains meaningful teaching and learning. The first statement of participant 1 implies that insufficient class time forces teachers to move quickly through lessons, leading to surface-level discussions rather than deep conceptual understanding. Learning becomes task-oriented rather than meaning-oriented. Time pressure compromises higher-order thinking, reflection, and meaningful dialogue. Participant 1's second statement indicates a disconnect between expected learning outcomes and the actual time provided. Instructional goals are perceived as unrealistic within the prescribed schedule. Curriculum expectations may be overly ambitious given existing time structures. Furthermore, the statement of participant 6 suggests that planned learning activities, such as discussions, practice tasks, assessments, or collaborative work, exceed what can reasonably be accomplished in a single class period. Fixed class durations limit instructional flexibility and active-learning strategies. Participant 3 added that time challenges worsen when teachers must adjust to varied learner needs. This highlights that differentiated instruction requires additional time, especially when addressing varied learning needs, abilities, or paces. Adapting lessons for diverse learners further strains already limited time. Inclusive and learner-centered teaching is difficult to sustain under strict time constraints. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

"It often results in rushed discussions and limited depth of understanding." (P1)

"It cannot be achieved within the allotted time per week." (P1)

"A one-hour class is not enough to cover all the activities." (P6)

"Time is really challenging for us because teachers adjust to the type of learners." (P3)

These statements imply that time constraints are a central barrier to effective teaching, affecting instructional depth, curriculum implementation, activity completion, and responsiveness to learner diversity. The findings suggest reconsidering time allocation, curriculum load, or instructional pacing to support meaningful and inclusive learning experiences.

Recent studies affirm that insufficient instructional time is a recurring barrier in SHS settings. Ochoa et al. (2024) reported that teachers frequently struggle with "limited time" when planning and implementing activities for diverse learners, resulting in rushed instruction and reduced depth of learning. Internationally, alignment research also indicates that time allocation rarely matches the cognitive load of competency-based curricula (Zhao et al., 2023). These parallels reflect how time constraints undermine meaningful competency development and prevent teachers from providing adequate scaffolding.

Participants also highlighted that lesson exemplars and activities are too lengthy and numerous, and often impossible to complete within the scheduled time. Participant 2 described activities as *"very lengthy and impossible to finish in just an hour"*. This implies that learning activities require more time than is allotted, indicating poor alignment between the activities' complexity and the class duration. Students may not fully engage with or complete tasks, limiting skill development and meaningful learning. While Participant 5's statement points to an excessive number of planned activities, forcing teachers to skip, rush, or assign unfinished tasks as homework. Instructional quality may be compromised as teachers prioritize coverage over mastery. The statement of Participant 6 implies that lesson topics are too broad or dense for a single class session, making comprehensive discussion and understanding difficult. Learners may experience a fragmented or superficial understanding of key concepts. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

"The activities are very lengthy and impossible to finish in just an hour." (P2)

"There are a lot of activities that could not be done in the allotted time." (P5)

"The topic is too long and cannot be covered in one hour." (P6)

These statements imply that the volume and length of lesson content and activities are disproportionate to the allotted instructional time. This misalignment results in unfinished activities, rushed lessons, and limited

opportunities for deep learning. The findings underscore the need for better lesson pacing, activity prioritization, and curriculum streamlining to ensure instructional feasibility.

Research corroborates the concern that curriculum materials often prescribe more tasks than are feasible. Veliganio et al. (2026) found that SHS teachers struggle with “ready-made” instructional materials that are misaligned with classroom realities, leading to the modification or omission of activities. Additionally, Ochoa et al. (2024) noted that designing activities that cater to diverse learners becomes challenging when existing materials are overly extensive or not contextualized. These findings reinforce participants' observations that overly packed learning activities impede effective delivery and frustrate both teaching and learning processes.

Teachers also struggled to adjust instruction based on varying learner abilities and readiness. Participant 2 noted that students do not learn at the same speed, even within the same grade level or subject. A single pacing guide may not be appropriate for all classes. Teachers struggle to maintain consistent progress across sections while responding to learners' needs. The statement of Participant 3 highlights the heterogeneity of learners, particularly across academic strands, requiring varied activities, strategies, and levels of difficulty. With this, instruction must be differentiated, which increases planning demands and time pressure for teachers. Participant 6 implies that learning gaps hinder lesson continuity, as teachers cannot move forward without addressing unresolved difficulties. Lesson flow is disrupted, and curriculum pacing is slowed to accommodate remediation. Another statement of Participant 2 indicates that many learners enter classes without essential prerequisite knowledge, particularly in mathematics, which affects their ability to grasp new concepts. Teachers must reteach basic skills to reduce the time spent on grade-level content. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

“Each student and section has different pacing.” (P2)

“Our students are diverse, so activities must be varied per strand.” (P3)

“It is difficult to introduce a new topic if they are still struggling with the previous one.” (P6)

“Some students do not have the fundamentals of math.” (P2)

This echoes findings from multiple recent studies. Bacus and Alda (2022) found that teachers in senior high school environments navigate diverse expectations, skill levels, and learner apprehensions, requiring adaptive strategies to support learners effectively. Ochoa et al. (2024) further identified “designing activities to cater to diverse needs of students” as a major challenge in SHS, underscoring the difficulty of balancing curriculum demands with learners' varied readiness levels. These studies support the participants' experiences and highlight that addressing learner diversity requires time, differentiated strategies, and well-aligned curriculum materials and resources that are not always available.

Resource, Contextual, and Systemic Implementation Constraints. This captures the systemic barriers that hinder the effective implementation of the strengthened Senior High School Curriculum, particularly those related to resources, infrastructure, contextual appropriateness, and institutional processes. While the curriculum aims to streamline competencies and enhance learning, teachers report that insufficient materials, misaligned learning resources, inadequate facilities, and inconsistent administrative systems often constrain its implementation. These systemic gaps shape the overall teaching–learning environment and influence how teachers carry out instructional plans. This highlights how curriculum success depends not only on teacher competence but on the readiness, responsiveness, and resource capacity of the school system.

Teachers reported limited access to appropriate and timely instructional resources. Teachers consistently stressed that instructional materials, particularly exemplars, LAS, and subject-specific resources, were either insufficient or not provided on time. Participant 1 stated the insufficiency of teaching materials. This implies that the quantity of available instructional resources is not enough to support effective teaching and learning, particularly for varied activities, remediation, or enrichment. Teachers may be forced to improvise or reduce the use of instructional strategies due to limited resources. Participant 2 revealed that only lesson exemplars were provided. This suggests that instructional support is narrow and limited, with lesson exemplars serving as the

primary, sometimes sole, resource. Lesson exemplars may not adequately address diverse learner needs, pacing differences, or contextual classroom realities. Participant 4 emphasized that resources “*are not readily available and accessible*,” meaning teachers must either search for them or create their own. This implies that even when materials are available, teachers may still have difficulty accessing them, possibly due to logistical, technological, or administrative constraints. Delays or barriers to access reduce instructional efficiency and lesson preparation. Participant 3 described teaching materials as “*the biggest problem*,” adding that important resources were discovered only much later in the school year. This emphasizes that resource limitations are perceived as the most critical instructional issue, outweighing other challenges such as pedagogy or classroom management. Improving the provision of materials could significantly enhance teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes. The following are the statements given by four of the participants:

“*There is lack of sufficient teaching materials.*” (P1)

“*The only materials provided are the lesson exemplars.*” (P2)

“*Resources and materials are not readily available and accessible.*” (P4)

“*The biggest problem is the teaching materials.*” (P3)

These statements imply that the lack of sufficient, varied, and accessible teaching materials significantly constrains instructional delivery. Teachers rely heavily on limited resources, such as lesson exemplars, which may not adequately support diverse learners or complex competencies. This resource gap undermines instructional flexibility, lesson quality, and the effective implementation of the curriculum.

Recent literature confirms that inadequate instructional resources are a major barrier to implementing SHS curricula. Veliganio et al. (2026) reported that SHS teachers frequently encounter resource shortages and must often supply or create teaching materials themselves due to delays in DepEd’s distribution system. Argate et al. (2024) similarly found that teachers in pilot implementing schools faced non-uniform access to instructional materials, which affected lesson readiness and consistency across classrooms. These studies reinforce the participants’ experiences, showing that material insufficiency is a systemic rather than isolated problem.

Participants noted inconsistencies between the lesson exemplars and the Learning Activity Sheets (LAS), leading to confusion about what should be taught and how activities should be sequenced. Teachers reported that the exemplars and the LAS did not align, resulting in activities that could not be executed within the allotted time. They even noted that LAS content was overly lengthy and did not align with learners’ pacing needs, leading some to abandon LAS materials entirely. The following are the statements given by two of the participants:

“*The exemplars and the activities in the LAS did not align.*” (P5)

“*LAS and exemplars did not match.*” (P8)

These statements show that the activities provided in the LAS do not correspond with the strategies, objectives, or content outlined in the lesson exemplars. Teachers may struggle to decide which material to prioritize, leading to fragmented instruction. The mismatch further suggests that instructional goals, activities, and assessments may not be clearly connected across materials. Students may become confused about expectations, and lesson continuity may be disrupted. Because of the misalignment, teachers may need to modify, reconcile, or redesign activities to ensure consistency with lesson objectives. Additional preparation time is needed, adding to teachers’ workload and time pressure.

These statements imply that the lack of alignment between Learning Activity Sheets and lesson exemplars poses a significant instructional challenge. These inconsistencies undermine lesson coherence, increase teacher workload, and may negatively affect student understanding and achievement. These inconsistencies force teachers to make judgment calls on which materials to use, often resulting in fragmented implementation and uneven coverage of competencies. The misalignment also creates additional workload as

teachers must constantly cross-check, modify, and selectively use materials to achieve coherence. The findings highlight the need for better quality assurance and alignment in the development of instructional materials.

Research shows that material misalignment is a widespread barrier in outcome-based curricula. Zhao et al. (2023) explain that inconsistencies between instructional materials and curriculum standards create cognitive and procedural gaps that hinder instruction, requiring teachers to reorganize or adjust content to maintain alignment. Furthermore, Ochoa et al. (2024) found that teachers frequently encounter challenges with “ready-made” learning materials that do not correspond with pacing needs or with the actual classroom context, forcing educators to modify or even disregard them altogether. This aligns directly with participants’ experiences, demonstrating that material mismatch is not merely a local issue but a systemic pattern in curriculum reform.

Teachers also identified a lack of facilities and resources, including internet access and laboratory equipment. Teachers lamented that there is no internet connection in their building, making it impossible for students to access links embedded in exemplars. Teachers also described laboratory equipment that arrived “malfunctioning” or without manuals, creating safety and instructional challenges. They also stressed that the delayed release of exemplars compounded these issues, affecting their ability to meet weekly competency targets.

Participant 5 noted the lack of internet connectivity at their school, which prevents students from accessing links. This implies that online teaching tools, digital resources, and web-based activities cannot be utilized, restricting instructional strategies that depend on connectivity. Teachers and students are unable to fully leverage technology-enhanced learning, limiting access to up-to-date information and interactive learning experiences. This further shows that students’ lack of internet access prevents them from using supplementary learning materials, such as videos, simulations, or digital references. Learning becomes confined to offline materials, which may not fully support independent or enriched learning. Participant 7 stated that the defective laboratory equipment and the missing manuals were present. This implies that science and laboratory-based instruction are compromised by non-functional equipment and the absence of proper usage guides. Teachers may avoid or simplify experiments, reducing opportunities for experiential and skills-based learning. Participant 7 further noted the shortage and unsustainability of instructional materials, which affect continuity and consistency in lesson implementation. Teachers may need to share, reuse, or substitute materials, which may affect lesson quality and student engagement. The following are the statements given by two of the participants:

“There is no internet connection.” (P5)

“Students cannot access links because they are not online.” (P5)

“Some laboratory equipment is defective, and there are no manuals.” (P7)

“Materials are not enough and sometimes run out.” (P7)

These testimonies reflect that inadequate infrastructure, limited internet connectivity, defective equipment, and insufficient instructional materials pose serious barriers to effective teaching and learning. These constraints restrict the use of digital resources, weaken laboratory-based instruction, and disrupt lesson implementation, ultimately affecting the quality and equity of educational experiences.

Recent studies stress that adequate infrastructure is foundational to the success of senior high school reforms. Ochoa et al. (2024) emphasized that teachers face major obstacles when technological tools and school facilities do not support new pedagogical demands, reinforcing that ICT access is essential for modern curriculum delivery. Likewise, Argate et al. (2024) found that nonuniform access to internet connectivity and laboratory equipment significantly limits teachers’ capacity to implement content-heavy or activity-based subjects, undermining the intended outcomes of the SHS program. Collectively, these studies show that poor infrastructure directly undermines curriculum objectives, especially in STEM subjects, compelling teachers to improvise or reduce activities, thereby compromising learning depth.

Teachers also experienced difficulties with school forms, grading systems, and documentation. Many teachers reported issues with missing or outdated administrative tools, including electronic class records (ECR), SF-10 forms, and school cards. The new curriculum introduced new subjects, thus requiring a new format of the report cards and SF-10. The absence of these templates complicated documentation.

Participant 2 revealed the absence of official documents. This implies that critical learner records and reporting documents are not readily available, which affects the proper documentation of student progress and academic history. Teachers may be unable to record, validate, or transfer student performance data accurately. Participant 3 also pointed this out, stating the lack of a standardized template in these documents. This suggests that teachers are left without clear formatting or guidelines for preparing report cards. Inconsistencies in grading presentation and reporting practices may arise across teachers or schools. Participant 6 also pointed out the unavailability of the official electronic class record. This would result in teachers resorting to the old ECR, as Participant 5's statement reveals, given the misalignment between the ECR and the new curriculum. This implies delays or gaps in the rollout of digital assessment tools, forcing teachers to rely on manual or self-created records. Record-keeping becomes time-consuming, error-prone, and difficult to standardize. Furthermore, teachers struggle to accurately encode, track, and assess learners' performance in line with updated standards. The following are the statements given by four of the participants:

"We are not provided with the school card and SF-10." (P2)

"There is no template provided for the card." (P3)

"We still don't have the official electronic class record." (P6)

"The ECR is not suitable for the new curriculum." (P5)

These statements imply that assessment and reporting systems are inadequately prepared to implement the new curriculum. The lack of essential documents, standardized templates, and an aligned electronic class record increases teacher workload, leads to inconsistencies in assessment practices, and undermines the reliability of learner records. These findings highlight the need for the timely provision of standardized, curriculum-aligned assessment tools to support effective teaching and accurate learner evaluation.

Administrative inefficiencies are well-documented barriers to successful curriculum implementation. Veliganio et al. (2026) identified excessive paperwork, outdated documentation systems, and weak administrative support as significant sources of teacher stress and reduced performance in SHS settings. In addition, Ochoa et al. (2024) emphasized that teachers' administrative load increases when schools fail to provide adequate documentation templates, standardized procedures, or timely communication, leading to burnout and diminished instructional quality. These findings affirm that administrative structures are essential components of curriculum implementation, and when they fail, teachers are forced to compensate for systemic shortcomings.

Teachers further emphasized that some materials are not suited to their local context. Teachers' experiences with curriculum materials that do not fit the socio-cultural, technological, or economic realities of their local learning environment. Participant 5 explicitly stated that *"activities are not suitable in our rural area,"* describing how students were expected to complete tasks that assumed access to digital tools, cultural exposures, or resources not available in their community. Participant 5 further noted that these activities were *"not contextual and too sophisticated,"* signaling that they were designed for learners with higher technological readiness or urban exposure. This mismatch forces teachers to revise activities, simplify tasks, or completely disregard certain exemplars because they would not make sense to students in a rural environment. The comments suggest a deeper systemic issue: materials were created with a one-size-fits-all mindset, failing to account for diverse educational environments. Students may struggle to relate to the activities, which can reduce engagement and meaningful learning. As a result, teachers need to simplify, modify, or replace activities, thereby increasing their workload and affecting curriculum fidelity.

Recent studies affirm that contextualization is essential to the success of curriculum reforms, particularly in geographically and socioeconomically diverse nations such as the Philippines. Ochoa et al. (2024) found that teachers face significant challenges when ready-made materials do not align with local contexts, noting that activity design often fails to consider learners' backgrounds, available resources, or school settings. Argate et al. (2024) likewise reported that in many SHS implementations, teachers struggle with materials that assume uniform access to technology and facilities, conditions rarely met in rural areas. These studies reinforce Participant 5's experiences by showing that contextual mismatch is not isolated but a systemic issue in curriculum implementation. When learning materials are not tailored to community realities, students struggle to bridge abstract content with lived experience, ultimately reducing engagement and comprehension. Research consistently emphasizes the need for localized, culturally grounded curriculum resources to ensure equity and effectiveness.

These statements imply that the prescribed learning activities lack contextualization and are often too advanced for rural school contexts. This mismatch undermines student engagement and learning effectiveness, and places additional demands on teachers to adapt activities to suit local realities. The findings highlight the importance of designing flexible, context-responsive instructional materials that account for the diverse conditions in rural schools.

The findings demonstrate that curriculum misalignment (broad and complex competencies, insufficient time allocation, lengthy activities, and varied learner readiness), and significant systemic barriers (insufficient instructional materials, misaligned learning resources, inadequate infrastructure, documentation problems, and non-contextualized activities, create significant instructional strain for teachers and collectively hinder effective curriculum delivery. These challenges align closely with Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which posits that stress emerges when individuals perceive environmental demands as exceeding their available resources. Teachers' primary appraisal of the strengthened curriculum identifies these curriculum misalignments and resource deficiencies as threats to instructional quality. In contrast, their secondary appraisal reflects a sense of limited capacity to meet curriculum expectations, thereby heightening stress and the need to adopt compensatory strategies. These conditions exemplify how institutional limitations become persistent stressors that shape teachers' emotional and cognitive responses during implementation.

These findings also reflect Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes the interconnected influence of multiple environmental layers on individual experiences. Teachers' struggles with learner diversity, instructional demands, inadequate facilities, and technological barriers arise within the microsystem. At the same time, misalignment between lesson content, exemplars, and competencies stems from mesosystem interactions among school-level structures. Curriculum design issues, such as unrealistic time allocations or overly broad competencies, as well as resource shortages and material delays, originate in exosystem influences over which teachers have limited control. In contrast, national policy directions reflected in the strengthened SHS curriculum, and contextual mismatches in instructional materials represent macrosystem forces shaping classroom realities. The transition period of curriculum implementation further mirrors the chronosystem, as teachers navigate shifting expectations and systemic adjustments.

The findings reveal that teachers struggle with significant curriculum alignment issues, including broad and complex competencies, insufficient instructional time, lengthy activities, and varied learner readiness, all of which make effective lesson delivery difficult. These challenges often result in rushed discussions, superficial coverage of content, and continuous adjustments to pacing and instructional strategies. Despite these constraints, teachers persistently adapt by unpacking competencies, simplifying lessons, and modifying activities; however, their experiences collectively highlight the need for clearer competency design, realistic time allocation, and more supportive curriculum structures to ensure meaningful and manageable classroom implementation. At the same time, the findings demonstrate that these challenges are not solely teacher-level concerns but are deeply rooted in systemic and multi-layered ecological conditions. When institutional supports are weak, teachers experience increased stress and are compelled to compensate through personal effort, confirming both the transactional and ecological dimensions of the theoretical framework. Ultimately, the findings emphasize that curriculum reforms can succeed only when environmental systems at all levels are aligned, coherent, and responsive to classroom realities.

Institutional Gaps in Curriculum Implementation

Challenges arise due to weaknesses in curriculum planning, insufficient resources, limited training, and a lack of institutional support. Broader systemic and institutional weaknesses hinder the effective implementation of the strengthened senior high school curriculum. These challenges arise not only from classroom-level issues but also from misaligned policies, inadequate preparation, inconsistent leadership, and structural constraints embedded in the larger education system. Teachers' experiences show that curriculum implementation is significantly shaped by how well institutions, particularly DepEd and school administrations, prepare the environment for reform. Insufficient planning, inadequate training, inconsistent resource distribution, and limited administrative support create implementation gaps that negatively affect teaching practices and learning outcomes. Thus, there is an essential connection between institutional readiness and successful curriculum execution.

Based on the interviews with the participants, they reported several gaps in training, support, and implementation. Five subthemes emerged from participants' responses: inadequate curriculum planning and rollout preparation; limited and ineffective teacher training; delayed or insufficient provision of materials and resources; minimal administrative and institutional support; and structural constraints, including large class sizes. Each subtheme highlights how systemic barriers translate into the daily instructional challenges teachers face.

Inadequate Curriculum Planning and Rollout Preparation. Teachers attributed challenges to inadequate preparation and planning during curriculum rollout. Teachers expressed that the strengthened curriculum was launched without adequate planning and preparation. Participant 1 stated that the challenges they experienced are due to the gaps in curriculum planning. This implies that the curriculum was not comprehensively designed or aligned with actual classroom conditions, available resources, and teacher capacities. Poor planning leads to inconsistencies, confusion, and practical difficulties during implementation. Participant 1 also recognized the existing lapses in the implementation of the curriculum. This suggests that stakeholders acknowledge shortcomings in the current implementation, viewing them as transitional issues rather than permanent flaws. The curriculum rollout may be premature, relying on future adjustments rather than present readiness. Participant 4 noted the insufficient thoroughness in preparation. This implies that key aspects such as pacing, materials, assessment tools, and teacher support were inadequately considered during planning. Teachers are left to compensate for planning deficiencies through improvisation and additional workload. Moreover, Participant 5 noted a lack of school readiness. This indicates that schools lack the necessary systems, training, resources, and infrastructure to implement the new curriculum effectively. This implies that implementation challenges are systemic rather than teacher-related. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

“These challenges occur due to gaps in curriculum planning.” (P1)

“There are a lot of lapses that I think in the following years will be solved.” (P1)

“Maybe because it was not planned thoroughly.” (P4)

“The school is not prepared to implement the curriculum yet.” (P5)

Recent studies confirm these concerns. Ceremonia-Cerda (2024) found that Philippine curriculum reforms continue to suffer from weaknesses in planning and uneven standardization of practices, which create major barriers in implementation. Similarly, Herrera (2025) noted that the successful implementation of the MATATAG curriculum depends heavily on coordinated planning and policy support, yet many teachers report systemic inconsistencies and insufficient preparation for rollout. These studies validate that inadequate planning severely limits implementation fidelity.

Limited and Ineffective Teacher Training. Teachers emphasized that the training provided was limited and lacked practical application. Teachers repeatedly emphasized that the training they received was insufficient and not subject-specific. Participant 1 noted that training “*was not focused on the subject*” and lacked hands-on unpacking of competencies. This implies that training is too general or generic, failing to address subject-specific

competencies that teachers are expected to teach. This further suggests that his training sessions are largely theoretical, providing limited opportunities for teachers to practice unpacking competencies, designing lessons, or using materials. Teachers struggle to translate training inputs into classroom practice because the content does not align with their instructional needs, leaving them without the practical skills needed for effective classroom implementation. Participant 4 explained that effective training should demonstrate *“how to teach and implement inside the classroom.”* This highlights that teachers value training that directly addresses classroom realities, including lesson delivery, activity facilitation, assessment, and differentiation. More practice-oriented training could improve teacher confidence and instructional effectiveness. Participant 6 shared that taking over a subject *“without any orientation”* made implementation difficult. This implies that actual participation in training has a stronger impact than second-hand information or cascading approaches. Limited access to training opportunities may result in uneven teacher preparedness and inconsistent implementation. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

“Training was not focused on the subject that we will be unpacking.” (P1)

“We did not even have hands-on activities.” (P1)

“If the training focuses on how to implement inside the classroom, teachers can teach better.” (P4)

“Being able to attend training still hits differently.” (P6)

These statements reveal that teachers feel unprepared due to generic, non-contextualized professional development. These statements further imply that current teacher training programs are inadequately designed to support curriculum implementation. The lack of subject-specific focus, hands-on activities, and classroom-based guidance leaves teachers underprepared to unpack competencies and deliver lessons effectively. While training is recognized as valuable, its impact is diminished when it does not directly address practical teaching demands. These findings emphasize the need for targeted, experiential, and inclusive professional development aligned with classroom realities.

Daily Guardian’s 2025 report found that Philippine teacher training is often generic, compliance-driven, and lacking subject-specific focus, leaving teachers without the practical knowledge needed for curriculum reforms. Additionally, Batar et al. (2024), as cited in Herrera’s (2025) scoping review, found that many MATATAG training programs failed to provide sustained, meaningful development aligned with classroom realities. These findings reinforce teachers’ concerns about the quality of training.

Delayed or Insufficient Provision of Materials and Resources. Participants identified the lack and delayed release of materials as key reasons for challenges. Teachers emphasized that essential materials, including exemplars, LAS, and equipment, were often delayed, incomplete, or unusable.

Participant 1 shared that lesson resources were *“delayed when posted,”* meaning essential teaching guides are not provided on time, disrupting lesson planning and pacing. Teachers may be forced to rush preparation, adjust lessons at the last minute, or teach without proper guidance, affecting instructional quality. Participant 4 also noted the severe shortage of available resources. This indicates an overall scarcity of instructional resources, suggesting that teachers receive little to no material support for lesson implementation. Teachers must rely on personal resources or improvised materials, increasing workload and inequity across classrooms. Participant 7 described the arrival of laboratory equipment as *“late and malfunctioning,”* without manuals. This suggests that even when resources are delivered, they are often delayed or unusable, reducing their instructional value. Hands-on, experiential, and laboratory-based learning activities may be postponed, modified, or abandoned. Participant 8 added that subject references were not provided even during training. This implies that resource provision does not adequately account for subject-specific needs, thereby limiting effective content delivery. Certain subjects, especially those that require specialized materials, are disproportionately affected, thereby weakening curriculum fidelity. The following are the statements given by four of the participants:

“Lesson exemplars and LAS are delayed when posted.” (P1)

“There is none also in terms of resources.” (P4)

“Even the materials related to our subject are not provided.” (P8)

“Equipment and materials arrived late, and some are malfunctioning.” (P7)

These statements imply that delays, shortages, and quality issues in instructional resources significantly undermine teaching and learning. The late posting of lesson exemplars and LAS, combined with the absence of subject-related materials and malfunctioning equipment, disrupts lesson preparation and classroom implementation. These challenges increase teacher workload, limit instructional effectiveness, and reveal systemic weaknesses in resource planning and distribution.

This is consistent with recent research. Herrera’s (2025) scoping review revealed that inadequate resource allocation remains one of the biggest obstacles in MATATAG implementation, requiring teachers to shoulder additional burdens. Ceremonia-Cerda (2024) also noted persistent gaps in resource distribution and allocation in Philippine curriculum reforms, hindering schools’ ability to adapt to new programs effectively. Both studies confirm that resource delays undermine curriculum delivery.

Minimal Administrative and Institutional Support. Teachers reported minimal institutional support, particularly in facilities and ICT resources. Teachers shared that administrative support was limited or absent. The statements of Participant 3 and Participant 5, the lack of administrative support, imply that school administrators are not actively involved in supporting teachers, whether through guidance, problem-solving, or resource facilitation. Teachers may feel isolated and burdened by having to resolve implementation issues on their own, which can affect morale and instructional quality. Furthermore, the insufficient support for ICT and technological needs, as stated by Participant 3, highlights a lack of administrative support for essential technological resources, especially for technology-enhanced instruction. The lack of ICT support limits the implementation of innovative teaching strategies and access to digital learning resources. Participant 4 stated that administrators were *“not knowledgeable”* about the subjects, limiting guidance. This implies that administrators may lack sufficient understanding of subject-specific demands, making it difficult for them to provide relevant instructional support or informed supervision. Administrators’ decisions and guidance may not fully address the practical needs of teachers in specific subject areas. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

“We did not have administration support.” (P3)

“We really need internet or ICT tools.” (P3)

“The administration is not knowledgeable about the subject.” (P4)

“I have not felt the support from the administration.” (P5)

These statements imply that insufficient administrative support, limited ICT provision, and a lack of subject-matter understanding among school leaders contribute to teachers’ challenges in implementing the curriculum. The perceived absence of administrative backing weakens institutional support systems, increases teacher workload, and constrains effective teaching and learning. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening instructional leadership, resource support, and administrator capacity to ensure successful curriculum implementation.

The results align with the study by Mangabon (2025), which found that administrative and instructional leadership directly influence teacher performance during curriculum transitions; however, many schools lack the leadership capacity to support teachers effectively. Additionally, Thomas & Onyango (2022) reported that administrative challenges, such as insufficient supervision, lack of guidelines, and inadequate support systems, significantly hinder curriculum implementation in public schools. These studies confirm that weak administrative support obstructs curriculum reforms at the school level.

Structural Constraints – Large Class Sizes. This refers to physical and structural conditions, specifically large class sizes, that make curriculum implementation difficult. Participants emphasized that structural factors such as class size contribute to implementation challenges. Participants 1 and 6 pointed out overcrowded classrooms. These statements imply that class sizes exceed manageable limits, especially for activities that require interaction, monitoring, and feedback. Overcrowding limits opportunities for individualized instruction and meaningful student engagement. Participant 3 noted that the impact of class size on teaching and learning. This highlights that class size directly affects instructional quality, pacing, and classroom dynamics. Large class sizes reduce teachers' ability to monitor learning progress, facilitate discussions, and implement varied instructional strategies. Furthermore, Participant 5 stated that management is difficult in overcrowded classrooms. This implies that behavior management, activity organization, and attention maintenance become more challenging as the number of students increases. Teachers may spend more time on control and organization rather than instruction, reducing learning time. The following are the statements given by four of the participants:

“There are sections with 50 plus students.” (P1)

“Class size really matters.” (P3)

“It is very difficult to manage when there are many learners.” (P5)

“There are 50 to 60 students in some sections.” (P6)

These statements imply that large class sizes are a major structural barrier to effective teaching and learning. Overcrowded classrooms make classroom management difficult, limit individualized attention, and constrain the use of interactive and learner-centered approaches. These challenges further intensify existing issues related to time constraints, learner diversity, and curriculum demands, underscoring the need for reduced class sizes or additional instructional support.

The findings show that teachers' challenges stem from deeper systemic and institutional weaknesses, including inadequate curriculum planning, insufficient and non-specialized training, delayed resource provision, minimal administrative support, and structural constraints such as large class sizes. These conditions align strongly with Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which posits that stress arises when individuals perceive environmental demands as exceeding their available coping resources. Teachers' primary appraisal of poorly planned curriculum rollout, weak administrative support, and lack of materials identifies these as threats to successful implementation and instructional quality. Their secondary appraisal reveals limited institutional resources to mitigate these pressures, thereby intensifying stress and requiring teachers to adopt compensatory coping strategies such as modifying lessons, relying on colleagues, or lowering expectations. This reflects how systemic deficiencies function as ongoing stressors that shape teacher workload, emotions, and capacity for instructional adaptation.

Furthermore, this finding clearly illustrates Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes the multi-layered environmental influences affecting individual behavior and experiences. Weak curriculum planning and policy gaps represent macrosystem and exosystem failures, where national-level decisions and division-level structures do not sufficiently support teachers. Inconsistent administrative support and inadequate training operate within the mesosystem, disrupting the interaction between school leadership and classroom practice. Large class sizes, insufficient facilities, and daily resource shortages directly affect the microsystem, shaping teachers' immediate teaching-learning environment. The ongoing transition to the strengthened SHS curriculum further reflects chronosystem influences, as teachers navigate evolving expectations and incomplete institutional preparations. Taken together, this demonstrates that implementation difficulties are embedded in multi-systemic interactions rather than isolated classroom issues.

This reveals that many of the challenges teachers encounter arise from systemic and institutional shortcomings, including inadequate curriculum planning, insufficient and nonspecialized training, delayed resource distribution, and minimal administrative support. These issues create uncertainty, inconsistency, and added burdens for teachers who must navigate implementation without clear guidance or comprehensive

institutional backing. Overall, the findings emphasize that successful curriculum reform requires not only dedicated teachers but also well-structured systems, coordinated planning, and responsive leadership to ensure that implementation aligns with policy goals.

Impacts on Teachers' Performance and Teaching-Learning Outcomes

Curriculum implementation challenges have consequences on both teachers' professional functioning and the overall quality of classroom instruction. Difficulties encountered in implementing the strengthened Senior High School curriculum, such as misaligned content, limited resources, and systemic gaps, directly affect teachers' ability to perform their roles effectively. These impacts manifest as increased workload, instructional stress, and reduced lesson delivery efficiency. In turn, these challenges influence the teaching-learning process, often resulting in limited student engagement, uneven learning progress, and difficulty in achieving intended learning competencies. From a broader perspective, this highlights the interconnected nature of teacher performance and student outcomes, suggesting that when external and internal challenges constrain teachers, the quality of education is also affected. It underscores the need for supportive systems, adequate resources, and realistic curriculum expectations to ensure both teacher effectiveness and positive learning outcomes.

The following subthemes emerged from participants' responses: impacts on teachers' professional performance and well-being, and on teaching-learning processes and student outcomes.

Impacts on Teachers' Professional Performance and Well-being. Challenges affect teachers' confidence, workload, instructional practices, and professional growth. The challenges that teachers encountered in implementing the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum affect their professional performance, emotional well-being, workload, and adaptive behavior. While the curriculum aims to foster better learning outcomes, the increased demands, unclear expectations, and resource limitations place a significant burden on teachers. These pressures influence teachers' confidence, job satisfaction, stress levels, and instructional practices. This emphasizes that teachers' performance is shaped not only by competence but also by the systemic conditions in which they work. Consequently, curriculum challenges spill over into teachers' personal well-being, highlighting the interconnectedness of institutional demands and human resilience.

Teachers reported that challenges affect their confidence, particularly when lessons are not delivered effectively. Participant 1 stated that these challenges affected teachers' confidence, especially when lessons could not be delivered as intended. It indicates that external constraints (curriculum load, resources, time) are internalized as doubts about one's capability. Reduced confidence can discourage risk-taking, innovation, and the use of higher-order tasks, potentially reinforcing surface-level instruction. Participant 2 also expressed feeling "*down when students cannot understand the lesson,*" showing how student difficulties contribute to teacher self-doubt. This reflects a strong sense of responsibility for students' understanding, with the teacher personally feeling the impact of comprehension difficulties. Emotional strain may lead to burnout risks, decreased job satisfaction, and withdrawal from complex or time-intensive strategies. Participant 4 said the challenges "*affected my professional confidence and teaching performance,*" indicating that the curriculum's complexity led the teacher to question their instructional competence. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

"These challenges sometimes affect my confidence, especially when lessons cannot be delivered as thoroughly as intended." (P1)

"I would feel down when students cannot understand the lesson." (P2)

"It affected my professional confidence and teaching performance." (P4)

These statements reveal how professional identity is tied to teachers' perceived effectiveness, which is threatened when systemic constraints hinder successful lesson execution. Furthermore, these statements imply that systemic and instructional challenges have psychosocial consequences for teachers, undermining self-efficacy, morale, and perceived effectiveness. The emotional burden is closely tied to student comprehension and the teacher's ability to deliver thorough lessons. This highlights the need for supportive

leadership, practical training, adequate resources, and realistic pacing to protect teacher well-being and sustain high-quality instruction.

Research also shows that curriculum reforms often lead to teacher uncertainty and reduced confidence. Herrera's (2025) scoping review found that teachers' confidence is significantly affected when curriculum expectations exceed available support structures and when professional development is insufficient. International studies affirm similar patterns. Ceremonia-Cerda (2024) reported that inadequate preparation and systemic gaps in curriculum implementation weaken teachers' sense of professional efficacy, especially during transitions to new reforms. These studies confirm the link between curriculum conditions and teacher confidence.

Participants also emphasized that additional preparation and adjustments increase workload and stress. Participant 1 noted an increase in their workload and stress levels. This directly implies that teaching responsibilities have expanded, likely due to additional planning, adaptation, and problem-solving demands arising from curriculum changes. Sustained high workload may lead to fatigue, burnout, and reduced teaching effectiveness over time. Participant 1 further noted that they spend extra time on instructional preparation. This suggests that, if the provided materials are insufficient or misaligned, teachers are forced to create or source additional resources on their own. Teachers' planning time increases significantly, reducing time for rest, reflection, or professional growth.

Participant 3 shared that they "*bring our work into our homes to cope.*" This implies that school-related tasks cannot be completed within regular working hours, compelling teachers to work at home. Work-life balance is compromised, contributing to emotional exhaustion and stress. Participant 8 emphasized the stress associated with finding references. This indicates that teachers lack easy access to reliable, ready-to-use references, making resource hunting a stressful, time-consuming task. Instead of focusing on pedagogy and learner engagement, teachers expend energy locating basic instructional support. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

"Workload and stress levels have increased." (P1)

"Additional time is spent preparing supplemental materials." (P1)

"We bring our work into our homes to cope." (P3)

"Looking for references is stressful." (P8)

These statements show that the intensified workload, combined with insufficient institutional support, directly contributes to teacher burnout and reduced work-life balance. The lack of adequate instructional materials and references forces teachers to spend additional time preparing supplemental resources, often extending their work into personal time. This situation contributes to heightened stress, emotional strain, and potential burnout, highlighting the need for stronger institutional support, adequate resource provision, and realistic workload expectations.

This mirrors findings from recent studies. Daily Guardian's 2025 report revealed that excessive workloads, generic training, and lack of institutional support significantly increase Filipino teachers' stress levels and reduce their well-being. Ceremonia-Cerda (2024) also noted that curriculum reforms often intensify teachers' workloads due to gaps in resource allocation and unclear implementation guidelines, leading to increased stress and emotional exhaustion. These findings align strongly with the teachers' experiences in your study.

Teachers modify their teaching strategies to address challenges. Teachers shared that despite challenges, they adjusted their instruction to meet learners' needs. Teachers respond to instructional challenges by exercising professional agency, adaptability, and pedagogical judgment, rather than rigidly adhering to prescribed materials. Participant 1 reported being "*more resourceful and adaptive*". This implies that challenges serve as catalysts for professional growth, prompting teachers to innovate and adjust their practices rather than rely solely on provided materials. Teachers develop resilience and problem-solving skills to cope with gaps in curriculum support. Participant 2 described choosing "*items suitable to the learner's level.*" This indicates that teachers prioritize

students' readiness, ability, and comprehension when selecting or designing learning materials. Instruction becomes more responsive and differentiated, even when official materials are inadequate or mismatched.

Participant 6 stated that they used alternative strategies and activities. This implies that teachers actively seek additional strategies or activities when they feel unprepared or when prescribed materials are unclear. Teachers take initiative in addressing their own instructional gaps to ensure lesson continuity and effectiveness. Participant 8 also shared that she "*selected appropriate activities*" rather than strictly following the LAS. This suggests that teachers exercise professional discretion, adapting or deviating from Learning Activity Sheets (LAS) to better align with classroom context and learner needs. Strict curriculum fidelity is balanced with pedagogical judgment to enhance learning outcomes. The following are the statements given by four of the participants:

"They have pushed me to be more resourceful and adaptive." (P1)

"I look for items suitable to the learner's level." (P2)

"I search for alternative activities when I am not familiar." (P6)

"I did not rigidly follow the LAS and selected appropriate activities." (P8)

These responses highlight teachers' agency in maintaining instructional quality by adapting strategies, simplifying content, and tailoring learning experiences to overcome challenges in curriculum implementation. Rather than rigidly following prescribed materials, they modify activities, seek alternative resources, and tailor instruction to learners' levels. This adaptability helps sustain teaching effectiveness despite systemic constraints, but it also reflects the additional cognitive and workload demands placed on teachers due to insufficient or misaligned instructional support.

Recent research supports teachers' adaptability during curriculum reforms. Herrera (2025) found that teacher resilience and adaptive instructional strategies are essential for mitigating curriculum-related stress and ensuring teaching continuity in MATATAG implementation. Similarly, international literature shows that when systemic supports are weak, teachers compensate by improvising, being creative, and adapting to context (Thomas & Onyango, 2022). This confirms that teacher adaptability is a compensatory mechanism when institutions fall short.

Despite challenges, some teachers reported improvement in their teaching practices. The teachers' responses reveal that despite the many challenges brought by the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum, several educators experienced meaningful professional growth, becoming more resourceful, creative, and flexible in their instructional practices. This highlights the positive adaptive outcomes that emerged as teachers navigated curriculum complexity, systemic barriers, and contextual constraints. Their statements show that the difficulties did not merely burden them; rather, they also strengthened their instructional competence, pushed them to innovate, and encouraged reflective practice. This captures the transformative potential of challenges, how they can serve as catalysts for teacher improvement when met with resilience and adaptability.

Participant 5 emphasized that the new curriculum "*improved my teaching performance,*" indicating that the demands of the strengthened curriculum pushed the teacher to refine her pedagogical approaches, plan more thoroughly, and elevate the quality of her instruction. The participant's testimony suggests a shift from compliance-based teaching to more intentional and thoughtful pedagogy. Participant 5 further stated, "*I became more creative and innovative in my teaching,*" showing how the teacher actively explored new strategies, adapted existing materials, and designed context-sensitive activities to meet learner needs. This demonstrates that resource scarcity did not hinder her teaching; instead, it fueled creativity and pedagogical experimentation.

Similarly, Participant 7 shared that the challenges "*tested my flexibility and adjustment,*" highlighting the development of adaptive expertise. The teacher's reflection indicates internal growth, becoming more responsive to student needs, modifying lesson structures, and adjusting pacing to ensure learner understanding.

The word “*tested*” implies that adaptability was not optional but required, ultimately resulting in refined professional judgment and instructional agility. The following are the statements given by two of the participants:

“It improved my teaching performance.” (P5)

“I became more creative and innovative in my teaching.” (P5)

“These challenges tested my flexibility and adjustment.” (P7)

Recent studies show that curriculum challenges can stimulate teacher growth when educators engage in adaptive and reflective practice. Herrera (2025) found that successful MATATAG implementation is strongly linked to teachers’ resilience and their ability to develop creative instructional strategies to address systemic gaps. Likewise, Ceremonia-Cerda (2024) reported that inadequate resources and inconsistent curriculum support often prompt teachers to innovate and refine their pedagogical approaches, leading to greater professional competence over time. Supporting this, the Daily Guardian (2025) highlighted that Filipino teachers frequently respond to training and resource limitations through self-directed improvement and creative problem-solving, demonstrating growth despite institutional shortcomings.

Teachers experienced emotional pressure but developed coping strategies. Teachers reported stress, pressure, and emotional strain due to curriculum demands. Curriculum transition and adjustment place heavy emotional and personal demands on teachers, increasing stress and threatening work–life balance. However, despite these pressures, some teachers transform the challenge into an opportunity for professional improvement and resilience.

Participant 2 shared a heightened stress during the adjustment period. This implies that periods of transition, such as the implementation of a new curriculum, are emotionally taxing for teachers as they grapple with unfamiliar content, expectations, and systems. Without adequate support, prolonged high stress may lead to burnout, reduced morale, and diminished teaching effectiveness. Participant 3 reported that the lack of work-life balance “*can really affect*” their emotional state. This highlights that excessive workload and blurred boundaries between work and personal life negatively affect teachers’ well-being. Sustained imbalance can harm mental health, job satisfaction, and long-term professional commitment. Participant 7 provided a nuanced perspective, saying that challenges became a “*trigger... to become better,*” showing a balance between strain and motivation. This suggests that, for some teachers, stressful experiences motivate self-improvement, reflection, and skill development. Challenges can foster resilience, adaptability, and professional growth when teachers have the capacity and motivation to respond constructively. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

“Stress level is very high during the adjustment period.” (P2)

“If there is no work-life balance, it can really affect.” (P3)

“It became a trigger for me to become better in my profession.” (P7)

These statements reveal that emotional responses vary but are undeniably linked to the external pressures of curriculum implementation. While it significantly increases stress levels and threatens work–life balance, it can also serve as a transformative experience that pushes some teachers toward professional growth. This duality highlights the importance of institutional support systems that can mitigate harmful stress while enabling teachers to channel challenges into positive professional development.

The literature indicates that curriculum transitions often trigger emotional strain. Mangabon (2025) highlighted that inadequate administrative and instructional leadership during curriculum transitions contributes to teacher stress, emotional fatigue, and burnout. Furthermore, Herrera (2025) emphasized that teachers’ emotional well-being is heavily influenced by systemic gaps in support, resources, and training, often requiring them to rely on personal resilience to cope. These studies affirm the emotional dimension of curriculum implementation challenges reflected in this subtheme.

Impacts on Teaching-Learning Processes and Student Outcomes. Challenges encountered by teachers also influenced lesson delivery, student engagement, and learning outcomes. Difficulties such as insufficient time, limited materials, overcrowded classes, and complex competencies disrupt instructional pacing and reduce opportunities for deep learning. These systemic and instructional barriers create a classroom environment where students may struggle to master competencies, engage meaningfully in activities, or sustain motivation. This emphasizes the interconnectedness of teacher challenges and student learning experiences, showing that curriculum implementation issues inevitably compromise teaching–learning processes.

Teachers reported that time-and-material constraints led to superficial learning. Their statements suggest that insufficient instructional time forces teachers to rush lessons, which in turn prevents students from fully mastering the intended learning competencies and disrupts the planned instructional schedule. Participant 1 stated a rushed instructional delivery. This implies that teachers are pressured to move quickly through content, often prioritizing coverage over comprehension. Rushed lessons reduce opportunities for explanation, discussion, practice, and feedback, which are essential for deep learning. Participants 1 and 6 both noted the students' incomplete mastery of learning competencies and the teachers' inability to follow the planned competency schedule. These statements reveal that instructional pacing is heavily compromised, forcing teachers to prioritize completion over mastery. As a result, students receive less guided practice, fewer opportunities for conceptual understanding, and inadequate reinforcement. The following are the statements given by two of the participants:

“Our delivery of the lesson is rushed.” (P1)

“Students may not fully master the competencies.” (P1)

“I cannot target the competencies as scheduled.” (P6)

These statements imply that time constraints and rigid pacing expectations lead to rushed instruction, incomplete mastery of competencies, and disrupted lesson sequencing. Teachers are unable to deliver lessons as thoroughly as planned, which affects students' understanding and achievement of learning competencies. This highlights the need for more realistic pacing, flexible scheduling, and instructional support to ensure meaningful learning rather than mere content coverage.

Research supports these observations. Ceremonia-Cerda (2024) found that insufficient time and overloaded competencies in Philippine curriculum reforms often result in superficial instruction and reduced mastery of learning, especially when teachers cannot adjust pacing effectively due to external constraints. Similarly, Herrera's (2025) scoping review emphasized that curriculum implementation challenges often lead to rushed lessons and reduced depth of student learning when systemic support is insufficient. These findings directly align with the participants' experiences.

Teachers also reported that students tend to focus on completing activities rather than understanding concepts. Teachers noted that students tend to focus on finishing requirements rather than fully understanding concepts. Participant 1 mentioned that learners *“focus more on task completion rather than deep understanding,”* showing a shift from conceptual learning to compliance-based engagement. This suggests that the curriculum's heavy activity load and tight scheduling encourage students to prioritize speed over comprehension.

Previous literature validates this concern. Herrera (2025) reported that when curricular demands are too heavy and learning materials are too complex, students display surface learning behaviors, prioritizing outputs over cognitive engagement. International findings by Thomas & Onyango (2022) also indicate that excessive activity requirements and administrative pressure lead to task-oriented student behavior, limiting deeper learning and reflection. These insights mirror teachers' concerns that curriculum conditions promote superficial engagement.

Teachers further reported a decline in student motivation and engagement. Challenges affect students' interest and participation in class. Teachers explained that the curriculum challenges negatively influenced students' interest and confidence. When lessons become too difficult or are not delivered in a supportive and

accessible manner, students are at risk of losing confidence, motivation, and interest in learning. Participant 1 noted the decline in student confidence and motivation. This implies that learning difficulties, such as rushed lessons, a lack of mastery, or insufficient support, can lead students to doubt their abilities. Reduced confidence may discourage students from participating, asking questions, or persisting in challenging tasks. Participant 2 also noted that learners lose interest when lessons become too difficult. This suggests that lessons that exceed students' readiness levels or lack scaffolding can disengage learners. When students feel overwhelmed, they may withdraw cognitively and emotionally, leading to passive learning or avoidance. The following are the statements given by two of the participants:

"Students may lose confidence and motivation." (P1)

"Students tend to lose interest when lessons become difficult." (P2)

These statements imply that instructional challenges and increased lesson difficulty can undermine students' confidence, motivation, and interest in learning. When students struggle to understand lessons or feel left behind, they are more likely to disengage, which can negatively affect both short-term participation and long-term academic outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of appropriate pacing, scaffolding, and learner-centered instruction to sustain student motivation and confidence.

Research confirms these effects. Daily Guardian (2025) found that insufficient training, unclear curricular guidelines, and overwhelming demands reduce both teacher and student motivation, as learners struggle to cope with highly demanding or poorly supported activities. Ceremonia-Cerda (2024) similarly noted that complex reforms without adequate learning supports lead to decreased student engagement and higher levels of frustration among learners. These findings reinforce the direct link between curriculum challenges and declining student motivation.

Teachers also noted that large class sizes and limited materials affect student learning experiences. Participant 3 stated, *"Class size can really affect learning, especially for low-performing students."* Participant 3 added that *"students share worksheets due to limited materials."* This indicates that overcrowded classrooms reduce individualized attention, and peer collaboration becomes a necessity rather than a pedagogical choice. Low-performing students are more likely to fall behind in overcrowded classes because teachers cannot adequately monitor understanding, provide scaffolding, or address learning gaps.

Recent literature highlights similar concerns. The 2025 Cognizance Journal study on MATATAG implementation found that oversized classrooms and insufficient materials significantly hinder student engagement and performance, especially in performance-based and resource-intensive subjects. Additionally, Mangabon (2025) emphasized that poor resource allocation and overcrowded classes directly undermine students' ability to participate meaningfully in lessons, particularly in skills-based subjects requiring hands-on support. These findings affirm participants' concerns.

Some teachers observed improvements in student engagement and thinking processes. These observations indicate that instructional strategies that connect lessons to real-life contexts and emphasize learning processes lead to higher student engagement, improved cognitive organization and thinking skills, and a greater appreciation for learning as an active process rather than a product. This reflects a move away from passive learning toward meaningful, student-centered learning.

Participant 5 shared that contextualized activities make them more responsive. This shows that students participate more actively when learning tasks reflect familiar contexts or real-life situations. This suggests that contextualized instruction increases relevance, promotes interest, and helps learners connect new knowledge to prior experiences. Similarly, Participant 7's statement indicates progress in their ability to organize ideas logically, a key component of higher-order thinking. Furthermore, Participant 7 noted that students *"now value the process of learning,"* demonstrating a shift from outcome-driven to process-oriented engagement. This indicates deeper cognitive involvement, where students not only focus on correctness but also develop thoughtful, reflective, and step-by-step reasoning. These statements collectively illustrate how meaningful,

context-rich learning activities can counteract some of the negative effects of curriculum challenges by fostering cognitive growth and engagement. The following are the statements given by two of the participants:

“Students are more responsive when activities are contextualized.” (P5)

“Students improved in structuring their answers.” (P7)

“They now value the process of learning.” (P7)

Recent studies show that well-designed, context-specific learning activities enhance student engagement and cognitive processing. Herrera’s (2025) scoping review of MATATAG implementation found that when teachers contextualize lessons and adapt activities to students’ backgrounds, learners show increased participation, improved reasoning skills, and deeper conceptual understanding. Similarly, Ceremonia-Cerda (2024) concluded that curriculum reforms emphasizing relevance and learner-centered tasks promote better cognitive outcomes, particularly in structured thinking and reflective learning. Research also shows that meaningful engagement increases when students perceive activities as authentic and connected to their lived experiences, leading to improved motivation and learning processes (Daily Guardian, 2025). These findings support the teachers’ observations that contextualization and adaptive instruction positively affect students’ analytical and reflective learning behaviors.

Challenges affect lesson pacing and classroom scheduling. Teachers also reported that curriculum challenges disrupted lesson pacing and extended class schedules, affecting the flow of instruction. Participant 7 shared that *“classes sometimes extend to the next period,”* highlighting how lengthy and complex activities can exceed the allotted time, interfering with both teacher plans and the school’s overall timetable. This indicates that activity-heavy exemplars and time-consuming tasks create a mismatch between curriculum expectations and actual classroom realities. Participant 7 further explained that *“time is compromised due to activities and engagement,”* showing that even when students are interested and involved, the required activities may take longer than anticipated. These statements reflect a systemic issue: when curriculum materials are not calibrated to realistic timeframes, teachers struggle to maintain pacing, complete competencies on schedule, and balance content coverage with meaningful engagement. This results in disrupted instructional flow, reduced efficiency, and potential spillover effects on other subjects.

Recent research supports these findings, emphasizing that overly dense curricula and misaligned time allocations are major barriers to effective lesson pacing. Ceremonia-Cerda (2024) found that curriculum reforms in the Philippines frequently suffer from unrealistic time expectations, causing teachers to rush lessons or extend them beyond schedule, ultimately compromising learning quality. Likewise, Kilag et al. (2024) reported that MATATAG implementation challenges include time constraints and overpacked activity designs, which lead to scheduling conflicts and hinder teachers’ ability to complete required competencies efficiently. Herrera (2025) also noted that inadequate pacing flexibility and extended classroom activities often disrupt school timetables and reduce the instructional time available for other subjects. These findings confirm that lesson pacing and scheduling issues are systemic and reflect deeper curriculum design problems.

The findings reveal that challenges in curriculum implementation significantly affect teachers’ professional confidence, workload, and emotional well-being. Further findings reveal that these challenges disrupt lesson pacing, reduce the depth of learning, lower student motivation, and cause learners to focus on task completion rather than meaningful understanding. These outcomes align closely with Lazarus and Folkman’s (1987) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which explains that stress arises when environmental demands exceed available resources. According to this model, stress arises when individuals appraise environmental demands as exceeding their available resources. Teachers’ primary appraisal identifies broad competencies, insufficient materials, and new documentation requirements as threats to their instructional performance, effective instruction, and student mastery. In contrast, their secondary appraisal reflects feelings of inadequacy and limited capacity to provide sufficient scaffolding, differentiation, or feedback. These stress responses manifest as emotional strain, reduced confidence, increased workload, pressure to rush lessons, compression of competencies, and the need to manage disengaged learners, conditions that directly affect teacher well-being and teaching–learning processes.

Despite these pressures, teachers also demonstrated adaptive responses, modifying lessons, seeking resources, becoming more innovative, and strengthening instructional strategies, which reflect problem-focused coping in the transactional model. Teachers who reframed challenges as opportunities for growth exhibited adaptive coping, which the theory associates with better psychological outcomes and enhanced professional functioning. Their ability to transform stressors into catalysts for improvement mirrors the model's emphasis on coping as a dynamic, ongoing process shaped by individuals' interpretations and resource mobilization. Thus, this finding illustrates both the adverse emotional impacts of curriculum-induced stress and the emergence of adaptive professional behaviors that mitigate these effects.

The findings strongly align with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, demonstrating that dynamic interactions across multiple environmental layers shape both teachers' well-being and student learning outcomes. At the microsystem level, where direct teacher–student interactions occur, teachers experience emotional exhaustion, performance strain, and instructional challenges, while students exhibit reduced mastery, disengagement, and superficial learning. However, these immediate effects are rooted in broader systemic influences. Factors such as inadequate training, delayed instructional materials, misaligned learning activity sheets (LAS) and exemplars, insufficient facilities, and weak administrative support emerge from the mesosystem and exosystem, highlighting how institutional structures significantly influence classroom realities. Macrosystem forces, including national curriculum policies and expectations, further intensify these pressures by imposing demanding competencies and time constraints that lead to rushed instruction and diminished engagement. Additionally, the transition to the strengthened Senior High School curriculum represents a chronosystem influence, as ongoing reforms disrupt established teaching and learning routines, increasing both cognitive and emotional demands on teachers and students. Collectively, these interconnected layers illustrate that challenges in teacher performance and learning outcomes are not isolated incidents but the result of complex, multi-level interactions within the educational system.

The findings reveal that the challenges of implementing the strengthened curriculum significantly influence both teachers' professional experiences and student learning outcomes. Teachers face increased workload, diminished confidence, emotional strain, and demanding instructional conditions, which affect their ability to deliver lessons effectively. At the same time, these challenges (such as limited instructional time, inadequate materials, large class sizes, and complex competencies) compromise lesson delivery, reduce opportunities for deep learning, and lower student motivation and engagement. As a result, teaching often becomes rushed, leading to superficial mastery of competencies and task-oriented rather than meaningful learning behaviors. Despite these constraints, teachers demonstrate resilience by adapting their strategies, becoming more resourceful, and innovating their approaches to meet learners' needs. Notably, when teachers contextualize instruction and adjust activities, students exhibit improved engagement and cognitive processing. Overall, the findings highlight that curriculum pressures generate both negative and adaptive outcomes, and that the effectiveness of teaching–learning processes depends not only on teacher competence but also on adequate institutional support, availability of resources, realistic pacing, and supportive learning conditions.

Instructional Adaptation and Collaborative Learning Engagement

Teachers took proactive steps to modify their instructional practices and to adopt collaborative approaches to implement the strengthened Senior High School curriculum effectively. This reflects teachers' ability to adjust teaching methods, materials, and classroom strategies in response to learners' diverse needs, curriculum demands, and contextual limitations. Instructional adaptation involves simplifying complex concepts, integrating varied teaching techniques, and making lessons more accessible and engaging for students. At the same time, collaboration among teachers, such as sharing resources, co-planning lessons, and participating in professional learning communities, emerges as a critical support mechanism. In the face of systemic challenges and resource constraints, teachers rely not only on individual creativity but also on collective professional practices. This adaptive and collaborative approach enhances teaching effectiveness and helps sustain meaningful learning experiences despite difficulties in curriculum implementation.

The following subthemes emerged from participants' responses: instructional adaptation and resourcefulness, and collaborative and professional learning engagement. These subthemes collectively illustrate

how teachers' adaptive expertise becomes a key driver of curriculum success, especially in resource-constrained contexts.

Instructional Adaptation and Resourcefulness. This reveals that teachers cope with curriculum challenges by modifying instruction, simplifying competencies, developing materials, and utilizing available tools to ensure effective teaching. This highlights how teachers respond to the challenges of implementing the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum by actively adapting instruction, modifying materials, simplifying competencies, and seeking creative ways to ensure learning continuity. This also emphasizes that teachers serve not only as curriculum implementers but also as curriculum interpreters, reshaping, reorganizing, and contextualizing learning based on real-time classroom realities. Consistent with the literature, curriculum implementation is never linear; rather, teachers continuously negotiate between demands and constraints, exercising professional judgment to maintain instructional coherence (Gürhan, 2026). Their adaptability demonstrates that effective teaching under reform requires not only technical skills but also sustained resourcefulness, particularly when materials are insufficient, pacing is unrealistic, or learner readiness varies widely.

Teachers focus on essential competencies and simplify complex lessons to make them manageable. Participant 1 emphasized prioritizing the most essential competencies and simplifying complex topics. This means that the teacher makes instructional decisions based on what is most important for students to learn, especially when time or capacity is limited. This reflects curriculum prioritization and instructional clarity. Participant 6 mentioned adjusting the lessons to the students' learning capacity. This means the teacher recognizes learner diversity, avoids a one-size-fits-all approach, and uses differentiated instruction to ensure lessons are accessible and understandable. This highlights learner-centered instruction and sensitivity to students' cognitive levels. Participant 7 also noted the need to merge the learning competencies. These statements show that teachers refine and reorganize competency expectations into manageable instructional units. Teachers demonstrate professional judgment rather than rigidly following the curriculum. The teachers practice adaptive teaching by prioritizing essential competencies, simplifying content, and integrating lessons to align with students' abilities and time constraints, ensuring meaningful and attainable learning outcomes. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

"I prioritize the most essential competencies and simplify complex topics." (P1)

"I simplify the lessons according to the students' learning capacity." (P6)

"I merged the learning competencies so that they can be achieved within the day." (P7)

Their practice aligns with findings from workload-mediated adaptation research, which show that teachers condense, prioritize, or restructure curricular content in response to time pressure and cognitive load (Gürhan, 2026). Research on adaptive teaching also affirms that simplification is a legitimate strategy for addressing learner diversity, particularly when competencies are unrealistic for the allotted time or resources (Leswell, 2025).

Teachers also adjust lesson plans, activities, and teaching approaches based on learners' needs. Participant 2 implies that teachers practice instructional flexibility. It further implies that the teachers make decisions after considering students' learning needs, difficulties, and responses. This reflects learner-centered and responsive teaching. Participant 3 reported that some activities were not included to suit the student's needs. This implies that the teacher exercises professional discretion in selecting classroom activities. The teacher recognizes that not all prescribed activities are suitable for every group of learners. This indicates adaptive lesson planning based on student readiness and context.

Participant 8 noted that they did not rigidly follow the LAS. This implies that teachers view the Learning Activity Sheet (LAS) as a guide rather than a strict script, and that they choose activities that best support learning outcomes. This shows instructional autonomy and reflective practice. Participant 6 also reported the need to modify the lesson to meet the competencies. This implies that the teacher is conscious of the need to maintain

alignment with learning competencies and engage in ongoing lesson improvement. This highlights curriculum alignment and reflective teaching. The following are the statements given by four of the participants:

“I changed my strategy based on the needs of the students.” (P2)

“There are activities that I did not include and some I changed to suit the students.” (P3)

“I did not rigidly follow the LAS and selected appropriate activities.” (P8)

“I still need to modify and align the lesson to meet the competencies.” (P6)

These statements reflect differentiated planning as a response to misaligned and overly lengthy LAS activities. This aligns with international research showing that adaptive teaching, dynamic adjustment based on learner readiness, is more effective than rigid differentiation models and reduces workload-related stress (Leswell, 2025). Similarly, Lapidot-Lefler (2025) found that responsive instructional adjustments support learner engagement and sustain classroom inclusivity.

Teachers also create their own instructional resources because there are few available materials. Participant 1’s statement implies that teachers recognize gaps or limitations in existing instructional materials and take the initiative to develop additional resources to support learning. This reflects instructional initiative and resourcefulness. Participant 2 emphasized that teachers *“should be able to prepare their own lesson materials.”* This implies that the teacher. This implies that the teacher emphasizes teacher competence and autonomy in instructional planning. This indicates a belief in professional preparedness and ownership of instruction. Participant 8 reported that they personally made their own test questionnaires. This implies that teachers exercise control over evaluation tools to ensure fairness and relevance. This highlights assessment literacy and alignment-focused practice. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

“I create supplemental materials.” (P1)

“You should be able to prepare your own lesson materials or handouts.” (P2)

“We made our own test questionnaires ourselves.” (P8)

These statements show that creating instructional materials becomes necessary when the provided materials are inadequate. This is consistent with recent research indicating that curriculum transitions often widen the gap between prescribed materials and classroom needs, leading teachers to rely on self-made or external resources (Wildan et al., 2026). RAND’s (2025) AIRS findings similarly reveal that teachers regularly adopt or design new materials due to misalignment or lack of guidance in provided resources.

Teachers use technology to enhance instruction and reduce workload. Participant 3 noted the use of artificial intelligence as a support tool to reduce workload related to planning, material preparation, or assessment. The teachers recognize the increasing demands of teaching and seek efficiency-enhancing solutions, viewing AI as an assistive resource rather than a replacement for professional judgment. This reflects adaptive use of emerging technologies and workload management. Participant 3 added the use of digital presentation tools to structure and deliver lessons clearly. Teachers apply technology to enhance lesson organization and visual learning, and incorporate commonly available ICT tools into daily teaching routines.

Participant 8 shared that they resort to using AI for speed and efficiency. This shows technology acceptance and practicality in instructional preparation. Participant 4 added that technology helps in *“organizing materials and monitoring student progress.”* This implies that the teachers use technology not only for instruction but also for class management and assessment. This further implies that they employ digital tools to track learner performance and organize teaching resources. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

“I seek the help of AI to lessen the burden.” (P3)

“Use AI and other websites because it is faster.” (P8)

“We prepare and use PowerPoint presentations.” (P3)

“Technology helps in organizing materials and monitoring student progress.” (P4)

These behaviors show that teachers leverage digital tools for efficiency, organization, and engagement. Recent data from RAND (2025) confirm that teachers are increasingly relying on AI and digital resources for instructional planning, though many still lack institutional guidance. Furthermore, studies on teacher adaptability show that digital tools support instructional flexibility and reduce workload during curriculum transitions (Wildan et al., 2026).

Teachers also engage in self-study and research to improve their competence. The statement of Participant 2 took personal responsibility for professional growth, recognized knowledge gaps, and acted proactively to address them. This reflects professional self-responsibility and initiative. Furthermore, Participant 2 reported using various resources for the research. This implies that teachers use multiple sources (e.g., books, online materials, research, digital platforms) to support instruction. This indicates resourcefulness and commitment to informed teaching. Meanwhile, Participant 8 relies heavily on independent learning rather than formal training or external support. This demonstrates autonomy in developing knowledge and skills and highlights self-directed professional learning. The following are the statements given by two of the participants:

“I equipped myself with the knowledge that I need.” (P2)

“I researched a lot using different resources.” (P2)

“All I do is self-study.” (P8)

These statements highlight self-directed professional development driven by curricular demands and gaps in formal training. Research supports this: curriculum shifts often push teachers toward autonomous learning when training is insufficient or nonspecific (Wildan et al., 2026). Lapidot-Lefler (2025) also emphasizes that teacher-initiated learning strengthens pedagogical responsiveness and improves student outcomes.

Collaborative and Professional Learning Engagement. This highlights that teachers cope with challenges through collaboration, training, and engagement in professional learning communities. This further highlights how teachers respond to the challenges of implementing the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum through collaborative practices and professional learning engagement. This underscores the importance of collective support systems, peer collaboration, collegial sharing, seminars, LAC sessions, and informal learning networks in helping teachers navigate curriculum complexities. Collaboration functions as an essential buffer against instructional stressors, allowing teachers to pool resources, share strategies, clarify competencies, and strengthen professional identity. Recent studies affirm that professional learning communities (PLCs) enhance teacher capacity, improve instructional decision-making, and foster reflective practice by creating structured spaces for dialogue, co-learning, and joint problem-solving (Hendrickx et al., 2025). These insights demonstrate that collaborative environments form an indispensable aspect of teacher resilience and continuous professional growth during curriculum reform.

Teachers rely on colleagues for support, idea exchange, and resource sharing. Participant 1 mentioned collaboration with colleagues and sharing of resources, ideas, and experiences. This implies that teachers exchange teaching materials, strategies, and ideas to improve instruction, reflecting collaborative professional practice. Furthermore, teachers use shared experiences as a basis for improving practice, indicating peer learning and reflective collaboration.

Participant 3 also shared their ideas casually with colleagues. This implies that teachers collaborate not only through formal meetings but also through day-to-day interactions. This highlights informal professional

learning communities. Participant 6 also mentioned asking colleagues for help. This implies that teachers seek assistance without fear of judgment and recognize that colleagues are a valuable source of knowledge and support. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

“We collaborate and share resources and strategies.” (P1)

“We share our experiences and strategies with colleagues.” (P1)

“We have informal collaboration and sharing of ideas.” (P3)

“I asked for help from my colleagues whenever I did not understand.” (P6)

These statements highlight that peer collaboration compensates for unclear guidelines, insufficient training, and limited materials. Teachers co-construct knowledge, clarify competencies, and distribute workload through collective sense-making. Research confirms that strong PLCs promote open dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and higher professional learning gains, particularly when teachers collectively examine practice (Hendrickx et al., 2025). Similarly, Khasawneh et al. (2023) emphasize that collaborative teaching practices positively influence both teacher development and student learning outcomes.

Teachers attend seminars, workshops, and orientations to enhance their knowledge. These professional development activities play a crucial role in helping teachers understand their tasks, prepare instruction, and cope with teaching challenges. Participant 1 implied that teachers gain a clearer understanding of lessons, strategies, or curriculum through Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and workshops. Participant 2 emphasized that teachers use training as a foundation for lesson planning and instructional readiness. Participant 7 uses seminars not only for skill development but also to cope with demands and challenges. This highlights professional development as emotional and professional support. The following are the statements given by three of the participants:

“Attending LAC sessions and workshops helped improve my understanding.” (P1)

“Training helped me prepare what I am going to teach.” (P2)

“Attending seminars is one of my coping mechanisms.” (P7)

These statements indicate that structured professional development provides clarity, boosts confidence, and helps teachers translate curriculum expectations into classroom practice. Recent studies show that PLC-aligned training strengthens pedagogical reflection, enhances teacher identity, and improves content knowledge (Lemesaya, 2026). Scholars also note that collaborative continuing development, rather than isolated workshops, has a more significant impact on sustained instructional improvement (Balasi & Iordanidis, 2026).

Teachers also revealed that they extend their learning through informal communities and external networks. Beyond formal settings, teachers also use informal communities to support instructional needs. Participant 7 shared that teachers engage in informal, spontaneous professional discussions. Moreover, added that they expand their professional network beyond their immediate school or locality through webinars. Participant 8 noted the use of social media platforms for professional purposes, where they share and access instructional materials conveniently and collaboratively. This highlights digital collaboration and resource sharing. The following are the statements given by two of the participants:

“We have casual talks with colleagues about strategies.” (P7)

“We interact with teachers from other places during webinars.” (P7)

“We have a Facebook group where teachers share materials.” (P8)

These statements show that teachers proactively build wider networks to access diverse ideas, resources,

and peer insights. Research affirms that informal teacher networks enhance professional agency, improve the quality of collaboration, and expand access to shared expertise, key elements in effective curriculum implementation (Richter et al., 2022). Likewise, Liu et al. (2026) emphasize teacher collaboration, including digital networks, which strengthen teacher self-efficacy and support professional adaptation in technology-integrated contexts.

Teachers continuously evaluate and refine their teaching practices. Participant 1 said that teachers regularly check students' understanding during the learning process. This reflects responsive teaching and data-informed instruction. Participant 7 implied that teachers carefully revisit plans to ensure clarity, alignment, and suitability. Participant 7 added that teachers are willing to make significant adjustments to instruction when needed. This highlights instructional flexibility and adaptability. The following are the statements given by two of the participants:

"I use formative assessments to monitor understanding." (P1)

"I review my lesson plan repeatedly." (P7)

"My lesson plan was modified to the full extent." (P7)

These statements reflect ongoing reflective practice, in which teachers re-examine strategies, adjust pacing, and ensure alignment with learners' needs. Research shows that PLCs cultivate inquiry-based mindsets that help teachers interrogate and refine their instructional choices (Lemesaya, 2026). Hendrickx et al. (2025) likewise note that high-gain PLCs are characterized by open, reflective, and elaborative communication that leads to meaningful shifts in teacher beliefs and practices.

Teachers adopt innovative and student-centered strategies to improve engagement. Participant 5 shared, *"I became more creative and innovative in my teaching,"* adding that *"the curriculum is more learner-centered"* and *"students can learn among themselves through group work."* These statements show that collaboration inspires new strategies and reinforces student-centered pedagogy. Research indicates that collaborative learning environments encourage teachers to experiment, adopt culturally responsive methods, and co-design activities that promote deeper learning (Balasi & Iordanidis, 2026). Khasawneh et al. (2023) also confirm that collaborative teaching enhances instructional creativity and improves student academic outcomes.

Their reliance on supportive peer interactions, whether through resource sharing, reflective dialogue, or online communities, helps reframe stressful experiences as manageable through collective action, which aligns with research showing that professional learning communities enhance teachers' reflective capacity, confidence, and instructional efficacy (Hendrickx et al., 2025; Lemesaya, 2026). Moreover, collaborative relationships also serve emotion-focused coping functions, providing reassurance, reducing feelings of isolation, and fostering psychological resilience, consistent with findings that teacher collaboration strengthens self-efficacy and supports adaptive behavior during educational reforms (Liu et al., 2026).

The findings indicate that teachers address the challenges of implementing the strengthened curriculum through both individual instructional adaptations and collaborative support mechanisms. Teachers actively modify their teaching practices by simplifying competencies, adjusting lessons, creating supplemental materials, integrating technology, and engaging in self-directed learning. At the same time, they rely heavily on collegial collaboration through professional learning communities (PLCs), Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, seminars, informal networks, and shared reflective practices. These responses strongly align with Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which explains that individuals manage stress by appraising environmental demands and mobilizing both personal and social coping resources. In their primary appraisal, teachers identify broad competencies, misaligned materials, insufficient resources, and increased workload as significant stressors. Their secondary appraisal then guides them to adopt coping strategies within their control, including problem-focused approaches such as modifying instructional activities, co-creating materials, leveraging technology, and sharing teaching strategies, as well as emotion-focused coping through

collaboration that reduces stress, restores confidence, and minimizes feelings of isolation. By combining adaptive instructional practices with strong collegial support, teachers enhance their coping capacity, demonstrating that coping is a dynamic process shaped by both individual initiative and the availability of supportive social and professional resources.

The findings also align with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that individuals adapt their behaviors in response to interconnected environmental layers. Teachers' adaptive strategies emerge from immediate microsystem conditions, such as learner diversity, classroom resource limitations, and collegial interactions, which require real-time instructional adjustments and collaboration. At the same time, mesosystem processes are evident in teachers' participation in Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, trainings, seminars, and team-based planning, linking classroom practices with broader school structures. Exosystem influences, including delayed materials, misaligned exemplars, and access to online professional networks, further shape teachers' ability to respond by expanding resources beyond their immediate environment. These systemic constraints, reinforced by macrosystem forces such as national curriculum policies and the emphasis on continuous professional development, push teachers to innovate, engage in self-directed learning, and integrate technological tools. Moreover, the ongoing curriculum reform, situated within the chronosystem, intensifies the need for both individual adaptation and collaborative learning as teachers continuously adjust to evolving expectations and instructional demands. Collectively, these multi-layered interactions illustrate how teachers reinterpret and respond to curriculum challenges within their ecological context, demonstrating that dynamic relationships across all environmental systems shape both adaptive practices and collaborative strategies.

The findings show that teachers respond to curriculum challenges with high levels of instructional adaptability, resourcefulness, and collaborative engagement, employing strategies such as simplifying competencies, modifying activities, creating supplemental materials, leveraging technology, and engaging in self-directed learning. At the same time, they rely on collaboration through resource sharing, reflective dialogue, participation in trainings and Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, and involvement in informal professional networks to strengthen instructional capacity and collectively address gaps in materials, pacing, and content clarity. These adaptive and collaborative practices demonstrate teachers' active negotiation of curriculum demands despite limited resources, time pressure, and diverse learner needs. Consistent with recent research highlighting that curriculum adaptation is a routine, workload-mediated response to systemic constraints and that teachers depend on creative adjustments and external resources during reform transitions (Gürhan, 2026; Wildan et al., 2026), the findings reinforce the critical role of teacher-driven innovation in sustaining instructional quality and ensuring learning continuity. Furthermore, the centrality of collaboration in these findings is supported by studies showing that strong professional learning communities enhance teacher learning, reflective practice, and instructional confidence, while also promoting innovation and improving student outcomes (Hendrickx et al., 2025; Lemesaya, 2026; Khasawneh et al., 2023). Collectively, these results highlight that both adaptive instructional practices and sustained collaboration are not merely supportive strategies but essential components of effective and responsive curriculum implementation.

SUMMARY

This study investigated the lived experiences of senior high school teachers in implementing the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum. It sought answers to the following research questions: 1) What challenges do senior high school teachers face in the implementation of the strengthened senior high school curriculum? 2) Why do these challenges occur in the context of curriculum implementation at the classroom level? 3) How do these challenges affect teachers' performance and the overall teaching-learning process? 4) What strategies or coping mechanisms do teachers employ to address the challenges encountered in implementing the strengthened curriculum?

The study used a qualitative research design. It was conducted in the Schools Division of Misamis Occidental, specifically in one of the National High Schools in the Calamba district, which is one of the five schools in the Division that are pilot implementers of the Strengthened Senior High School Curriculum for the

school year 2025-2026. Eight (8) Senior High School teachers participated in the study, selected through purposive sampling. A semi-structured interview guide was used in gathering the data. Braun and Clarke's (2006) Method of Thematic Analysis was used in analyzing the data gathered.

FINDINGS

The following are the themes as findings of the study:

1. *Curriculum Design and Resource Constraints.* Teachers face significant misalignment between curriculum expectations and classroom realities, hindering effective lesson delivery.
2. *Institutional Gaps in Curriculum Implementation.* Hasty planning, limited and nonspecialized training, delayed or insufficient resources, minimal administrative support, and large class sizes reveal structural weaknesses that greatly affect curriculum enactment.
3. *Impacts on Teachers' Performance and Teaching-Learning Outcomes.* Curriculum challenges strain teachers' performance and well-being, hindering teaching quality and overall learning outcomes.
4. *Instructional Adaptation and Collaborative Learning Engagement.* Teachers cope with implementation challenges by adapting instruction to sustain effective delivery and manage difficulties through peer collaboration and reflective practices.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following are the conclusions:

1. The misalignment between curriculum design and actual classroom conditions, combined with resource, contextual, and systemic constraints, indicates that the strengthened SHS curriculum cannot be effectively implemented without realistic alignment of competencies, instructional time, materials, and school-level support structures.
2. The presence of institutional gaps demonstrates that curriculum reform efforts will continue to face implementation difficulties unless educational institutions strengthen leadership, coordination, and logistical systems.
3. The negative impacts on teachers' confidence, workload, emotional well-being, instructional performance, and on students' engagement, mastery, and learning outcomes reveal that curriculum challenges significantly compromise the quality of teaching and learning, underscoring the need for comprehensive teacher support mechanisms and improved learning conditions.
4. Teachers' reliance on instructional adaptation, resourcefulness, and collaborative professional learning indicates that while teachers actively compensate for systemic shortcomings, sustainable curriculum implementation ultimately requires institutionalized support for collaboration, ongoing professional development, and accessible instructional resources.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are the recommendations:

1. School Heads and Master Teachers collaborate with teachers to review and contextualize curriculum competencies by aligning them with realistic instructional time and classroom conditions. This can be done through regular school-based consultations, lesson planning sessions, and feedback mechanisms to improve coherence between curriculum expectations and actual teaching practices.

2. School Administrators strengthen curriculum implementation support by ensuring the timely organization and sharing of available instructional materials, improving internal distribution systems, and streamlining documentation processes within the school to reduce instructional delays and workload.
3. School Heads and Guidance Personnel implement manageable teacher support initiatives, such as scheduled wellness activities, peer support groups, and workload monitoring strategies, to help maintain teachers' motivation, emotional well-being, and instructional effectiveness.
4. Teachers and School-Based Learning Groups may sustain professional development through regular Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, peer mentoring, and collaborative lesson planning. These school-level initiatives can enhance instructional adaptation, strengthen professional competence, and support effective curriculum implementation within available resources.
5. Future researchers expand the scope of the study by exploring additional variables, using larger and more diverse participant groups, or employing mixed-methods approaches to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of curriculum implementation dynamics and to generate findings that can be compared across different educational contexts.

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