

The Lived Experiences of Guidance Advocate Designates in Implementing Homeroom Guidance Program

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological inquiry aimed to explore and describe the lived experiences of Guidance Advocate Designates in implementing the Homeroom Guidance Program in the Malita North and West Districts. Specifically, it sought to examine their experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights regarding program implementation. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design. Using purposive sampling, eleven (11) Guidance Advocate Designates who were directly involved in the implementation of the program were selected as participants. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis and coding procedures. Findings revealed three major themes regarding

participants' experiences: strengthened student development and engagement through homeroom guidance, implementation constraints in homeroom guidance delivery, and contextual and systemic barriers in guidance implementation. Participants highlighted improved student openness, enhanced teacher-student relationships, and holistic learner development, while also identifying challenges such as time constraints, workload pressure, limited resources, lack of training, parental disengagement, and students' behavioral and emotional difficulties. In coping with these challenges, participants practiced effective time management, student-centered guidance approaches, and collaboration with parents and colleagues. Insights further emphasized the importance of professional growth, strong interpersonal relationships, and transformative realizations in improving guidance implementation. The study concludes that effective implementation of the Homeroom Guidance Program depends on adaptability, collaboration, and continuous professional development. It is recommended that schools strengthen training opportunities, provide adequate resources, and enhance stakeholder collaboration to support effective program delivery.

Keywords: *advocates, experiences, implementation, homeroom professional development*

INTRODUCTION

The Homeroom Guidance Program is a comprehensive developmental program implemented in schools to support learners' academic, personal, social, and career development. It serves as a structured platform where homeroom advisers facilitate activities and discussions that promote socio-emotional learning, values formation, mental health awareness, decision-making skills, and positive behavior among students. Through homeroom guidance implementation, teachers are expected to provide learner support, monitor students' well-being, and create a safe and supportive classroom environment. However, despite

its importance, the effective implementation of homeroom guidance programs remains a significant challenge in many educational systems. Homeroom advisers are frequently tasked with providing socio-emotional, academic, and career guidance without sufficient preparation or structured professional development. This situation often leads to inconsistent delivery of guidance services, lower teacher confidence, and limited support for learners' holistic development.

Globally, professional development and structured guidance services are increasingly emphasized, yet challenges remain. In India, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) now requires schools to employ qualified counseling staff at a ratio of one counselor per 500 students and provide at least 50 hours of capacity-building training, reflecting growing efforts to enhance guidance delivery and ensure adequate support for socio-emotional learning and career guidance (Choudhari, 2026). In Indonesia, a survey of guidance and counseling teachers found that 61.3% of respondents demonstrated only medium competency in program evaluation, indicating gaps in professional preparation and implementation capacity (Khairun et al., 2025). Similarly, in China, a systematic review revealed that school counselors often experience role ambiguity and inconsistent training, limiting the effectiveness of school guidance programs (Liu et al., 2025).

Despite international recognition of the importance of structured guidance, research shows that professional development opportunities for teachers in counseling roles are limited and unevenly distributed. International research suggests that insufficient training and unclear guidance roles reduce program effectiveness and lead to variability in student support outcomes (Indreswari & Ediyanto, 2024).

In the Philippine setting, the shortage of trained guidance counselors is a critical barrier to effective homeroom guidance. Only about 1,000 registered guidance counselors serve over 40,000 public schools, despite more than 5,000 plantilla positions available, forcing schools to rely heavily on teacher designates who lack specialized training (Chi, 2024). Furthermore, DepEd's professional development assessment identified gaps in competencies related to mental health, crisis management, and career guidance, highlighting the urgent need for targeted capacity-building programs for guidance staff (DepEd, 2024).

In Davao region, research has documented the impact of guidance practices on student outcomes. A study in the Caraga District, Division of Davao Oriental, found that homeroom guidance practices were at very extensive levels, and significantly influenced learners' academic persistence (Calig-Onan & Baguio, 2025). Additionally, a study in the Paquibato District reported that guidance teacher-advocates face high workloads, limited resources, and social stigma regarding mental health, emphasizing the need for professional development, institutional support, and community engagement to strengthen guidance services (Latawan, 2025).

These gaps highlight the urgency of a phenomenological study examining the lived experiences of guidance advocate designates. Understanding their professional development needs, challenges, and successes can inform strategies to strengthen homeroom guidance implementation. This study aligned with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), particularly target 4.c, which aimed to increase the supply of qualified teachers through targeted professional development. Strengthening guidance advocate competencies is crucial for improving learner support, socio-emotional well-being, and educational equity.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research is grounded in the detailed exploration of human experiences and social phenomena as they are lived and interpreted by individuals (Patton, 2022). The phenomenological tradition specifically focuses on understanding the essence of lived experiences from the perspective of those who have directly encountered the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2023). In the context of this study,

phenomenology was appropriate because the intent was to explore how Guidance Advocate Designates experience the implementation of the Homeroom Guidance program and how professional development influences their practices, coping strategies, and learning insights.

Phenomenological research sought to uncover how individuals make meaning of their experiences rather than why they behave in certain ways (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design enabled the researcher to gather rich, nuanced narratives that reflect participants' personal views, challenges, interpretations, and professional growth related to Homeroom Guidance implementation. Through this approach, the study aimed to provide in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon so that an understanding of the participants' lived realities can be developed and used to inform relevant professional development decisions.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants of this study are the 11 Guidance Advocate Designates from selected public secondary schools in the Malita North and Malita West Districts, chosen because of their direct involvement in implementing the Homeroom Guidance program. The sample size was justified based on qualitative research principles and empirical evidence on data saturation. According to Guest et al. (2020), many qualitative studies reached sufficient saturation within approximately six to twelve interviews, particularly in homogenous populations with clearly defined research questions. In the same manner, Hennink and Kaiser (2021) noted that code saturation and meaning saturation typically be achieved between nine and seventeen interviews, depending on the topic's scope and participant similarity. Vasileiou et al. (2018) suggested that the decision on the number of participants will be determined by the study's purpose, the homogeneity of the sample, and the quality of interview interactions. Considering these guidelines and the shared professional context of Guidance Advocate Designates, the chosen number of eleven participants would be considered sufficient to generate rich, meaningful data and achieve thematic saturation in this phenomenological study (van Manen, 2023). Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method commonly used in qualitative research. This approach allowed the researcher to deliberately choose individuals who would be able to provide rich, detailed, and relevant information based on their role and experience with the phenomenon under study (Etikan, 2016; Subedi, 2021).

Research Instrument

The study utilized a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researcher. This instrument was designed to gather in-depth information about the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and learning insights of Guidance Advocate Designates in implementing the Homeroom Guidance program. The use of a semi-structured format allowed flexibility during the interview, enabling participants to express their thoughts freely while still addressing the key areas of the study. To ensure the quality and appropriateness of the instrument, the interview guide underwent a validation process prior to data collection. It was reviewed by three research experts who have relevant experience in qualitative research and instrument development. Their feedback was used to refine the questions, ensuring clarity, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study. After incorporating the suggested revisions, the finalized interview guide was used during the conduct of the interviews. This process helped ensure that the data gathered are credible, reliable, and suitable for answering the research questions.

Data Gathering Procedure

In qualitative research, the goal was not to gather data from many individuals but to obtain in-depth and meaningful insights from participants who have direct experience with the phenomenon under study. Data collection took place in natural settings where participants are most comfortable, using methods that allowed them to openly express their thoughts and experiences. In this study, the primary method of data collection was in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which provided flexibility while still guiding the conversation toward the research objectives (Creswell & Báez, 2020).

The process begun by securing the necessary approvals from relevant authorities. The researcher requested permission from the Dean of the Graduate School of Rizal Memorial Colleges. Once approved, a formal communication was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Davao Occidental to seek authorization to conduct the study in selected public secondary schools. After receiving approval, the researcher coordinated with school heads to properly arrange the schedule and ensure that the conduct of the study would not disrupt school activities.

After completing the required permissions, the researcher identified and selected participants based on the established criteria of the study. Selected participants were personally invited and provided with informed consent forms. The researcher clearly explained the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the rights of the participants. Emphasis was given to voluntary participation, assuring them that they may withdraw at any time without any consequences. An initial orientation was also conducted to agree on the most convenient time and place for the interviews.

The researcher conducted the interviews in a setting that is comfortable and familiar to the participants. A semi-structured interview guide was used to maintain focus while allowing participants to freely share their experiences. With their permission, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure that no important details are missed. This approach helped capture accurate and comprehensive data while maintaining a natural flow of conversation (Mashuri et al., 2022).

After the interviews, the recorded responses were transcribed word-for-word. To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned, and all information were treated with strict confidentiality. The transcripts were reviewed and organized systematically in preparation for analysis. The researcher may also consult with the research adviser and selected experts to verify the accuracy of the interpretations and ensure that the emerging themes are grounded in the actual data.

Throughout the entire data collection process, ethical considerations were carefully observed. The researcher ensured respect for the participants, maintain honesty in handling the data, and remain objective during the process. Transparency and fairness were upheld in reporting the findings, and efforts will be made to minimize any form of bias. By following these procedures, the study aimed to maintain credibility, dependability, and overall trustworthiness.

Data Analysis

The data gathered in this study were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences in the implementation of career guidance services. The researcher began by thoroughly reading and reviewing all interview transcripts multiple times to achieve a holistic understanding of the responses. Significant statements directly related to the phenomenon were then identified and extracted, after which meanings were formulated to reflect the participants' experiences. These meanings were organized into clusters to reveal emerging themes and patterns across the data. From these themes, an exhaustive description of the phenomenon was developed, which was then refined to identify its fundamental structure. Finally, the findings were validated through participant checking to ensure that the interpretations accurately represented their lived experiences.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness was essential to ensure that the findings of this phenomenological study were credible, useful, and defensible in informing professional development initiatives and educational policy. This was established through the four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through expert-validated interview guides and purposive selection of participants actively involved in homeroom guidance, supported by prolonged engagement and triangulation (Ahmed, 2024). Transferability was ensured by providing rich, detailed descriptions of the research context, allowing others to assess applicability in similar settings (Ahmed, 2024). Dependability was achieved through systematic documentation of procedures and the use of an audit trail to ensure transparency and consistency (Tariq, 2025). Confirmability was maintained by grounding interpretations in

participants' responses, using reflective journaling, member checking, and verbatim quotes to minimize bias (Ahmed, 2024).

Ethical Considerations

In conducting this phenomenological study, the researcher strictly adhered to ethical standards to protect participants' rights, dignity, and welfare, ensuring credible and responsible findings (Joungtrakul et al., 2025). Informed consent was secured by fully explaining the study's purpose, procedures, benefits, and minimal risks, with participants given the right to withdraw at any time (Rajasegaram & Gani, 2025). Participation was voluntary and free from coercion, with no impact on participants' academic or professional standing (McLeod, 2024). The study posed minimal risk and prioritized participants' safety and well-being throughout data collection (InnovateMR, 2025). The researcher-maintained competence and objectivity through appropriate methods and ethical practices (Scheytt & Pflüger, 2024), while data were collected in private settings to ensure comfort and openness (Joungtrakul et al., 2025). Confidentiality and anonymity were preserved through secure data handling and coding of identities (Rajasegaram & Gani, 2025). No conflict of interest was declared, and findings were reported truthfully (McLeod, 2024). Principles of justice and transparency were upheld by ensuring fair treatment and clear communication of the research process while safeguarding participant confidentiality (InnovateMR, 2025; Scheytt & Pflüger, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lived Experiences of Guidance Advocate Designates in the Implementation of the Homeroom Guidance Program

The analysis generated three essential themes on the lived experiences of Guidance Advocate Designates in the implementation of the homeroom guidance programs. These themes reflect both the positive experiences and challenges encountered by the participants in delivering guidance services. Based on the figure, three (3) essential themes were identified: 1.) *Strengthened Student Development and Engagement through Homeroom Guidance*; 2.) *Implementation Constraints in Homeroom Guidance Delivery*; 3.) *Contextual and Systemic Barriers in Guidance*.

Theme 1. Student Development and Engagement through Homeroom Guidance. The first theme highlights the positive contribution of homeroom guidance in improving students' participation, openness, and overall development. Participants observed that students became more willing to express their thoughts and emotions when sessions were interactive, supportive, and non-judgmental. Teachers also noticed stronger teacher-student relationships, as learners gradually became more comfortable sharing their academic and personal concerns. In addition, participants emphasized improvements in students' behavior, decision-making, emotional maturity, and social skills. These findings suggest that homeroom guidance contributes not only to academic support but also to students' socio-emotional and interpersonal development. This finding relates to Corral (2025), who described homeroom guidance as supportive of holistic learner development. Similarly, Caparas and Baysa (2025) noted that guidance activities may help improve student participation and responsiveness in school settings.

Theme 2. Implementation Constraints in Homeroom Guidance Delivery. The second theme reflects the challenges encountered by Guidance Advocate Designates in implementing homeroom guidance effectively. Participants experienced time constraints and workload pressure due to balancing instructional responsibilities with guidance-related tasks. Teachers explained that limited time often resulted in rushed sessions and reduced opportunities for meaningful interaction with students. They also encountered difficulties in maintaining student participation, especially among learners who were shy or less interested in the activities. Furthermore, participants highlighted the lack of instructional materials and limited resources, which affected the variety and quality of guidance activities. These findings indicate that

the implementation of homeroom guidance is influenced by teacher workload, learner engagement, and institutional support. Jimena and Garcia (2024) discussed that teachers handling homeroom guidance often experience difficulties related to workload and multiple responsibilities. In the same way, Viray and Estrella (2022) pointed out that unclear role expectations may contribute to stress among teachers assigned to guidance-related functions.

Theme 3. Contextual and Systemic Barriers in Guidance Implementation. The third theme reflects broader institutional and learner-related challenges affecting the implementation of homeroom guidance. Participants expressed the need for additional training and professional development, particularly in counseling and mental health support, to strengthen their confidence in handling complex student concerns. Limited parental involvement also emerged as a challenge, as inconsistent communication and weak support from home affected the effectiveness of school interventions. Moreover, teachers encountered behavioral and emotional concerns among students, including anxiety, low confidence, and disruptive behavior, which influenced participation during sessions. These findings suggest that effective homeroom guidance requires stronger institutional support, active parent collaboration, and continuous teacher development. Khairun et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of improving teachers' competencies in guidance implementation through professional learning opportunities. Likewise, UNICEF (2021) highlighted that family involvement plays an important role in supporting children's emotional and educational development.

Coping Mechanisms Employed by Guidance Advocate Designates in Addressing the Challenges Encountered During the Implementation of the Homeroom Guidance Program

Below describes coping mechanisms employed by guidance advocate designates in addressing the challenges encountered during the implementation of the homeroom guidance program. The data reveal three major themes: effective time and work management practices, student-centered guidance and behavior management, and collaboration and professional support systems. These themes reflect the adaptive strategies used by teachers to manage workload demands, respond to diverse student needs, and sustain the delivery of homeroom guidance despite structural and contextual constraints.

Theme 1. Effective Time and Work Management Practices. The first theme reflects how Guidance Advocate Designates cope with workload demands through organization, prioritization, and emotional regulation. Participants shared that they schedule tasks in advance, prioritize important responsibilities, and maintain composure during stressful situations. Teachers also established clear classroom expectations to minimize disruptions and maintain organized guidance sessions. These practices suggest that effective self-management helps teachers sustain guidance implementation despite multiple responsibilities. This finding is related to Viray and Estrella (2022), who discussed how teachers assigned to multiple roles often rely on time management practices to address workload demands. Similarly, Lawson et al. (2025) noted that emotional regulation may support teachers in maintaining effectiveness while responding to student concerns.

Theme 2. Student-Centered Guidance and Behavior Management. The second theme reflects the use of learner-centered and flexible approaches in managing students' needs and behaviors. Participants emphasized the importance of one-on-one conversations, positive reinforcement, and adjusting strategies according to students' personalities and learning needs. Teachers explained that individualized communication and encouragement helped strengthen trust, improve participation, and increase student confidence. They also modified activities and discussions to make sessions more engaging and relatable. These findings suggest that guidance becomes more meaningful when teachers use adaptive and supportive approaches responsive to learner diversity. Caparas and Baysa (2025) explained that student participation may improve when activities are relevant and engaging for learners. In addition, Arrieta et al. (2021) discussed the importance of supportive communication strategies in maintaining student engagement during guidance activities.

Theme 3. Collaboration and Professional Support Systems. The third theme highlights the importance of collaboration, parent communication, and professional support in sustaining homeroom guidance implementation. Participants shared that seeking advice from colleagues and receiving support from school leaders helped them manage difficult situations more effectively. Teachers also strengthened communication with parents to improve interventions and student support. Furthermore, participants recognized the value of seminars, workshops, and professional development opportunities in improving their competencies and confidence in guidance implementation. These findings suggest that collaboration and institutional support contribute to more effective guidance practices. Jimena and Garcia (2024) noted that administrative support and coordination among school personnel influence the implementation of homeroom guidance programs. Meanwhile, Indreswari and Ediyanto (2024) emphasized the importance of professional development in strengthening teachers' guidance-related skills.

Learning Insights Drawn from the Experiences of Guidance Advocate Designates to Strengthen the Implementation of Homeroom Guidance through Professional Development

Below presents the learning insights drawn from the experiences of guidance advocate designates to strengthen the implementation of the homeroom guidance program through professional development. The data reveal three major themes: professional growth strengthens guidance effectiveness, strong relationships create better student support, and transformative realizations in strengthening homeroom guidance implementation.

Theme 1. Professional Growth Strengthens Guidance Effectiveness. The first theme reflects how teachers recognized the importance of continuous learning, experience, and self-management in improving guidance implementation. Participants realized that training and seminars enhanced their confidence and helped them better manage counseling-related concerns. They also learned the importance of flexibility and adaptability in responding to students' varying needs. Furthermore, teachers emphasized that time management, prioritization, and emotional control contributed to smoother implementation of guidance sessions. These findings suggest that professional growth supports teachers in becoming more responsive and effective in student guidance. Khairun et al. (2025) discussed the need for professional development in strengthening teachers' competencies in guidance implementation. Similarly, Iglesia (2025) noted that personal coping strategies and professional learning may help teachers sustain effectiveness despite workload demands.

Theme 2. Strong Relationships Create Better Student Support. The second theme emphasizes the importance of trust, communication, and collaboration in effective student guidance. Participants realized that students were more willing to open up when they felt heard, understood, and supported by teachers. They also highlighted the value of collaboration among parents, school leaders, and teachers in addressing student concerns more effectively. In addition, participants recognized that positive classroom environments and supportive interactions contributed to students' confidence, behavior, and participation. These findings suggest that meaningful relationships are important in strengthening guidance implementation and student support. Calig-Onan and Baguio (2025) discussed that supportive guidance practices may contribute to students' socio-emotional development. Likewise, Arrieta et al. (2021) highlighted the role of communication and stakeholder engagement in supporting student needs.

Theme 3. Transformative Realizations in Strengthening Homeroom Guidance Implementation. The third theme reflects the deeper professional insights gained by teachers through their experiences in implementing homeroom guidance. Participants realized that effective guidance requires empathy, patience, and sensitivity to students' emotional needs. They also viewed challenges as opportunities for growth, helping them become more flexible and adaptive in handling different classroom situations. Moreover, teachers recognized that strong teacher-student relationships create safe spaces where learners feel comfortable sharing their concerns and struggles. These findings suggest that homeroom guidance implementation involves not only technical skills but also personal and professional growth among teachers. Zheng et al. (2025) discussed that reflective practices may help teachers better understand

students' emotional needs. In the same way, Lawson et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of teacher awareness in responding to learners' emotional and mental health concerns.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the lived experiences of Guidance Advocate Designates in strengthening the implementation of the Homeroom Guidance program in the Malita North and West Districts. It specifically addressed three research questions focusing on their lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and learning insights.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that Guidance Advocate Designates experience both enabling and constraining factors in the implementation of the Homeroom Guidance program. On one hand, the program contributes positively to student openness, improved teacher–student relationships, and holistic learner development. On the other hand, implementation is challenged by heavy workload demands, limited time, insufficient resources, low student engagement, and gaps in training and parental involvement. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of Homeroom Guidance is shaped not only by classroom practices but also by institutional and systemic support.

In terms of coping mechanisms, it is concluded that Guidance Advocate Designates actively respond to challenges through both individual and collaborative strategies. They employ time management, instructional adjustments, student-centered approaches, and behavior management techniques to sustain implementation. Collaboration with colleagues, school leaders, and parents also plays a vital role in addressing difficulties and ensuring continuity of the program.

Regarding learning insights, the study concludes that effective implementation of Homeroom Guidance is strengthened through continuous professional development, reflective practice, emotional intelligence, and strong stakeholder collaboration. Teachers recognize that meaningful guidance delivery requires adaptability, sustained learning, and supportive relationships within the school community.

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