

Unheard Narratives of Public-School Teachers' Coffee Consumption

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Abstract

Teachers have a pivotal role in shaping students' intellect by sharing knowledge and fostering critical thinking. Despite being perceived as resilient, they encounter struggles that impede their effectiveness due to overwhelming paperwork, classroom management issues, administrative responsibilities, and the nature of their work. As a result, one of the ways they cope to alleviate stress is by turning to coffee and making it a part of their routine. This phenomenology study explored the unheard narratives of public-school teachers' frequency of coffee consumption, motivation, and impact on their daily routine. Ten (10) key informants were selected using purposive sampling to participate in the study. A structured interview guide was used and executed in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as an approach to data collection. The study revealed that the aroma, antioxidants, and warm feelings were the themes that drove teachers to consume coffee. Also, coffee provides an extra boost of energy, a brighter mood, and a sense of fulfillment as it is perceived to contribute to the daily routine of teachers. It is concluded that coffee secures a spot in the daily habits of teachers as it gives them the alertness and activeness needed to begin their day effectively. In addition, taking coffee breaks allows teachers to discuss their issues and difficulties while offering each other support. This fosters a sense of camaraderie over a cup of coffee, potentially resulting in solid friendships and forming a tight-knit teaching community, all for the benefit of the students.

Keywords: Coffee, Daily Routine, Motivation, Phenomenology, Public School Teacher

1. Introduction

Teachers, known as the "second parents," are considered the backbone of the educational system worldwide. They play an essential role in honing students' minds by imparting knowledge, nurturing critical thinking, creativity, social skills, and life lessons. Their impact exceeds the usual "four corners of the classroom," influencing their students' intellectual and emotional growth. Through their guidance, teachers provide essential knowledge across various subjects, enabling students to comprehend and analyze the world around them. Furthermore, by fostering inquiry, analysis, and problem-solving, teachers equip students with critical thinking abilities that benefit their personal and professional development. In addition to academic teachings, teachers also play a crucial role in instilling values such as empathy, cooperation, and respect that mold the students into not just achievers academically but responsible individuals in society. However, even though these second parents are perceived by the people who surround them as strong, independent, and goal-oriented people, they also have limitations that hinder them from being effective teachers in their respective assignments due to the bombarded paperwork (Osipov, 2020; Sabagh et al., 2018), classroom management challenges (Gage et al., 2018), administrative duties



(Koonkongsatian, 2017), and nature of work (Toropova et al., 2021). Thus, one of their coping mechanisms, at least to lessen their stress, is to consume coffee and make it their habit. Coffee consumption is ubiquitous in several organizations and workplaces; the education sector is no exception. As the demands on teachers slowly rise with increased tasks, emotional labor, and administrative duties, the need to cope with stress while still being productive becomes increasingly a concern. Aside from the problems encountered by the teachers, the COVID-19 virus has significantly affected how teachers handle their respective tasks and duties since the Department of Education (DepEd) implemented distance learning, specifically in public schools (Department of Education, 2020). At that time, teachers were dealing with the difficult task of adjusting to new ways of teaching and learning while also providing support for students dealing with social and emotional issues (Robinson et al., 2023).

Coffee is a widely consumed beverage in the workplace, often used to manage fatigue, improve focus, and boost work performance. Several scholarly articles explore coffee's effects on workplace performance and its prevalence among employees as a social and functional tool. A study emphasized that coffee during work hours is a social break and a method of handling tiredness, exhaustion, anxiety, and focus challenges, especially in demanding professional environments (Rodrigues et al., 2021). In a separate study, the scholars found that coffee improves and stabilizes reaction time (Anderson et al., 2018). However, it may increase commission errors and only partially reduce omission errors in individuals reporting poor sleep quality. Additionally, research indicated that regular coffee consumption is common among workers exposed to noise and vibrations within 82.5% of workers at high noise levels and 82.1% of workers exposed to local vibrations, while consuming caffeinated beverages are only 9.4% of the people working in noisy environments and 12.8% of vibro-exposed ones (Dimitrova et al., 2020).

In the realm of education, the experiences and narratives of public-school teachers often remain unheard, especially when it comes to seemingly mundane aspects of their daily lives. Research has examined how often college students use caffeine, how much they use it, and their patterns (Norton et al., 2011). Other studies have examined how much caffeine secondary school students use, why, and what makes it easier or more difficult for them to use (Turner et al., 2023). Another local study found that teachers who drink coffee do not perform better at work just because they drink coffee (Pineda & Hilario, 2023). However, coffee's unique role in public school teachers' lives and the impact of coffee consumption remain unexamined and consider the study's gap.

Given this context, the researchers sought to delve into the unexplored narratives of why public-school teachers drink coffee, their motivation, and its impact on their daily routines. The findings of this study will guide the researchers in providing implications that deeply understand the perspectives of the public-school teachers participating in the study.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

To address the study's inquiries, the researchers used a qualitative method, explicitly engaging in a phenomenology design that aims to investigate the worldview of public-school teachers about drinking coffee. Using this design, the researchers discovered the participants' perspectives on motivation and its effects on their daily routines. This study also occurred at Mabolo National High School in Cebu City, Philippines, where the public-school teachers taught.

2.2. Respondents and Sampling of the Study

The study selected ten (10) key informants to participate in the data gathering, and they were chosen using the purposive sampling technique. The researchers employed purposive sampling as an acceptable technique since not all public-school teachers are regular coffee drinkers. The researchers ensured that all study's participants were qualified based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) they should be a public-school teacher; (2) they consume coffee regularly; and (3) they are willing and not forced to become one of the key informants of the study.

2.3. Instrument

The study employed a structured interview to obtain the necessary information from the key informants. A structured interview ensures the specificity of responses and lessens the chances of the interviewer's variability (Rashidi et al., 2014). Also, before the commencement of the interview, the researchers asked experts from the field to do face validity to ensure the tool's accuracy and appropriateness were looked into.

The tool has two parts. The first part is an introduction, where the researchers give an overview of the study, including who the researchers are, the central concept, benefits, and importance. The second part focuses on the central part of the interview. It includes questions about how often the participants drink coffee, how it affects their daily routines, the perceived advantages and disadvantages, and how these factors influence their overall well-being.

2.4. Data Collection

After scrutinizing the people who could potentially participate in the study based on inclusion criteria, ten (10) key informants who met the criteria were chosen, subsequently, an informed consent letter was given to the key informants, indicating the researchers' intention to include them in the study.

Since schedule conflicts and time availability arose, the researchers used several techniques to gather data. Some key informants agreed to have it in a focus group discussion (FGD) setting, online interviews, and written interviews. Key informants were allowed to express how they felt and experienced the phenomenon, aligning with their values, self-evaluation, motivation, and attitude. Subsequently, the gathered data were converted to text, and the transcripts were assessed to find themes that serve as the study's findings.

2.5. Data Analysis

The study utilized Colaizzi's (1978) approach to analyze a qualitative-centered study focusing on understanding people's experiences. The following steps in executing Colaizzi's method: First, each transcript was thoroughly read and comprehended to grasp the responses. Then, the significant responses in the transcript were extracted. After that, meaningful insights were distilled from the various responses of the key informants. This was followed by accurately clustering themes. Finally, the findings were incorporated into a detailed description outlining the fundamental structure.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

This study also addressed ethical concerns by establishing different principles, including respect for individualism, impartiality, and compassion. Concerning individualism, participants' dignity was of utmost priority, and the privacy of the participants was ensured to protect their anonymity. They were treated regardless of their position (teacher I-III and master teacher) and status in the school; each was given equal treatment and the opportunity to participate and answer the questions raised by the enumerators, who are also the study's researchers. Each participant's contribution was considered based on their need, societal

contribution, share, and merit. Moreover, the participants were treated with compassion, considering their willingness to participate in the interview and no declaration of conflict of interest.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the study's findings regarding the unheard narratives of public-school teachers who are coffee drinkers. It also revealed some critical responses the participants gave about the frequency of coffee consumption in a day, motivation, and effects on their daily routine as public-school teachers.

3.1. Frequency of Coffee Consumption

3.1.1. Theme #1: Once a day, every morning

The key informants mostly responded that they consume coffee once a day, every morning since it gives them the alertness they need to start their day as public-school teachers. Aside from being alert, it provides a more focused vibe when doing school-related tasks and responsibilities. Two of the participants shared that:

"...I love drinking coffee as it helps me to stay awake, alert, and focus when going to my classroom, and I feel like I am more active talking in front of students". -P5

"...I drink only once a day every morning because drinking coffee every morning boosts my confidence in working, especially since I have many school reports to do." – P7.

Regular coffee consumption, even just one cup a day, is linked to a lower risk of various bladder, breast, colorectal, and liver cancers (Yu et al., 2011). In addition, an increase in coffee consumption by one cup per day is linked to a 3% decrease in the risk of developing cancers.

Several studies found that consuming coffee regularly has health benefits as it is associated with a lower risk of hepatocellular carcinoma (Bravi et al., 2017), low prevalence of metabolic syndrome in adults (Lu et al., 2022), prostate cancer (Yu et al., 2011), low blood pressure and pulse pressure (Cicero et al., 2023). Therefore, moderation of drinking coffee provides alertness and energy and gives essential health benefits, especially to public school teachers stressed by their respective work.

3.1.2. Theme #2: 2-4 More Times Throughout the Day

Some participants preferred to drink coffee not just once but more than for several reasons. One reason they shared is that they drink coffee every meal since it becomes part of the habit of drinking coffee during breakfast, lunch, and dinner time. Another reason is that they consume coffee during snack time (one in the morning and one in the afternoon). One of the participants indicated that:

"...due to my love of the aroma of coffee, I drink a minimum of 3 cups of coffee. I drink during breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Sometimes, I consume coffee during snack time in our school when the bell rings. I think drinking coffee has become part of my life". - P9.

Excessive coffee consumption can negatively impact health, especially if an individual consumes more than 400 milligrams of caffeine daily, and these are insomnia, nervousness, nausea, and other side effects (Web MD, 2020). On a positive note, some studies concluded that making it a habit to drink 3-5 cups of coffee per day helps a lot to an individual with a 19% lower risk of mortality from cardiovascular disease, 16% lower risk of mortality from coronary heart disease, and 30% lower risk of stroke mortality (Gulland, 2017). Additionally, coffee

intake with these frequencies was associated with lower chronic kidney disease (Kanbay et al., 2021), less nervousness in the morning (Goldstein & Kaizer, 1969), and no risk of hypertension (Ammon et al., 1983).

3.2. Source of Motivation and How It Changes Over Time

3.2.1. Theme #1: Indulge in the Delightful Aroma

One of the participants' motivations for drinking coffee is indulging in the aroma of their favorite coffees. The bold aroma of their beloved coffee denotes a genuinely exceptional experience from the participants' perspective as it boosts their productivity in doing their daily activities. One of the participants revealed that:

"...as an avid coffee lover, one of the reasons I love coffee so much is the aroma of my favorite coffee. The inviting scent of freshly brewed coffee sets a positive tone for the day ahead as it helps me to give a health-positive atmosphere in our classroom; however, due to health reasons that I have right now, I am limiting my consumption of my favorite coffee. It is so sad". -P1

"...I always start my day with a cup of coffee. It is not just about the caffeine boost; it is really the aroma that I love. The scent of coffee helps me feel more active and awake to make my classroom feel more like home". -P3.

As per the study by Caporaso et al. (2022), the aroma of coffee is a tremendous commercial interest and vital for the enjoyment of the coffee lover consumer. One study concluded that aside from the flavor, the aroma is an essential part of the coffee-drinking experience (Aryballe, 2022). Furthermore, when consuming coffee, an individual should try to inhale the coffee aroma as it stimulates alertness and cognitive abilities such as continuity of attention, quality of memory, and memory speed (Hawiset, 2019).

3.2.2. Theme #2: Bursting with Antioxidants

Due to its abundance of dietary antioxidants and its status as one of the most consumed drinks worldwide, coffee is now recognized as a significant contributor to overall dietary antioxidant consumption. Many individuals, including some public-school teachers, believe coffee is a good antioxidant. A particular participant in this study shared that:

"I started drinking coffee because of the belief that it is a good antioxidant." – P2

The same participant added, *"...advantages of coffee, based on what I researched, are: first, it is an antioxidant; second, it creates a good mood to start a day, and if drank in moderation, it can help to lower the likelihood of type 2 diabetes, heart problems, liver, and endometrial cancers, Parkinson's disease, and depression". – P2*

As per the research conducted by Lestari et al. (2022), Coffee by-products contain bioactive compounds with antioxidant properties, which can be used as additives in foods, beverages, and cosmetics, with potential benefits in skin care products. However, their benefits in skin care products require further investigation.

Likewise, Janda et al. (2020) explained that coffee beverages have high antioxidant activity and significant mineral content, with simple infusion and AeroPress providing valuable magnesium, manganese, chromium, cobalt, and potassium sources.

3.2.3. Theme #3: Offers a Feeling of Warmth

The coffee business has grown dramatically over the last several decades, and to stay competitive, it is critical to understand what factors influence consumers' acceptance of coffee. What does a cup of coffee do to people's emotions? An essential aspect of the consumer

experience is emotion, especially when it comes to something as deeply ingrained in culture as coffee. The scent, flavor, bitterness, and texture of dark roast coffee can give people a high-energy, happy feeling. The sensory characteristics of dark roast coffee (roast–aroma and flavor, burnt–aroma and flavor, bitter, and body) might elicit positive energy feelings for this population of coffee users, Adhikari et al. (2019) mentioned in their study. In line with these ideas, participants of this study were able to attest that they get more energetic and livelier when they can drink coffee, whether working with paperwork or being with the students in the classroom. Drinking coffee makes them alive and motivated to do what they must at that particular time.

“... I start my day with coffee to help me awake and feel alert while preparing for work. I might have another cup of coffee later in the day, around mid-morning or after lunch, to stay focused and energized.” – P5.

“... I am relaxing after drinking coffee. It is like I am eating food. I do not get tired.” – P1.

“Drinking coffee always makes my day moving. It always starts my day.” – P6.

“... The nature of my work requires a lot of energy and positivity; thus, drinking coffee before class makes my teaching delivery lively, and I can respond well to any queries my students ask.” – P9.

“... Coffee makes me happy, especially when paired with bread or sweets.” – P7.

According to Adhikari et al. (2019), coffee drinking stimulates positive emotions such as awake, boosted, energetic, jolted, jumpstart, pleased, productive, relaxed, rewarded, satisfied, soothing, and warm. Barlassina and Hayward (2019) added that the pleasure you get by tasting your morning coffee motivates you to drink more of it, which, in turn, results in you obtaining another pleasant gustatory experience.

3.3. Effect of Coffee on Public School Teachers’ Daily Routine

3.3.1. Theme #1: Extra Boost of Energy

Coffee helps teachers in public schools by boosting their energy as it has caffeine that prevents mild central nervous system action. This keeps them awake, and they no longer feel tired, which makes them have a productive day. In the morning or when they are having classes for long hours, teachers need to stay focused, involved, and actively engaged with the lessons they are teaching. As the participants stated:

“... it is like you do not get tired after drinking coffee. Then, you get more energy to do your work and other related tasks.” – P1

“...can increase alertness and focus. It is part of my everyday routine that I drink coffee, especially in the afternoon when I feel sleepy and still have schedule for a class”. –P5

“...I become very active as it starts my day. I feel like something is lacking without a coffee. It can become a lazy day.” –P6

“...makes me an active and sharp thinker; the nature of my work requires a lot of energy and positivity, thus drinking coffee before class makes my teaching delivery lively, and I can respond well to any queries my students ask”. –P9

“...it makes me more alert, especially if a lot of paperwork or reports need to be submitted”. – P10

Several scholarly works corroborate that consuming coffee can improve an individual’s mood. Studies found that short-term effects of caffeine consumption include enhanced mood and alertness (Haskell-Ramsay et al., 2018) and reduced sleep inertia (Centofanti et al., 2020).

Also, Reed et al. (2019) indicated that coffeeberry extract products significantly lessen self-reported fatigue and strengthen alertness during fatiguing cognitive-related duties. However, it has been advised that those who are highly sensitive should not consume >400 mg/d in order to avoid headaches, drowsiness, anxiety, and nausea (Nawrot et al., 2003). A sensitive individual might experience adverse effects at a lower dose than less sensitive individuals. Children are often considered sensitive because of their size and central nervous system development. This is concerning because many children and adolescents are frequent caffeine consumers (for instance, a recent US study found that 73% of children consume caffeine on a given day; Branum et al. (2014)).

Therefore, it is vital to identify thresholds above which adverse effects might occur. In the current study context, the thresholds in question relate to the group, with potential sensitivity to caffeine defined by the participants' being children.

3.3.2. Theme #2: A Brighter Mood

For teachers in public schools, the increased mood improves by taking coffee and brightens their emotional state. Through its caffeine content, coffee induces the release of brain chemicals that make you happy. In particular, dopamine and serotonin are associated with joy, pleasure, and well-being. As the participants revealed that:

"...drinking coffee is a day setter and gives me a mood to start the day right, especially in going to school". – P2

"...coffee makes me happy and helps me focus on lesson plans and other teaching-related tasks". – P7

For numerous public-school teachers, coffee is far more than just a drink; it is an essential custom that significantly improves lesson efficiency. An inquiry by Azevedo et al. (2016) found that drinking caffeine beverages enhanced endurance performance by 14% and improved mood in mentally fatigued individuals. Meanwhile, Saab et al. (2014) highlight some advantages of coffee consumption, such as enhanced liver function, lessening the risk of progression to cirrhosis, and lowered mortality rate in chronic liver disease.

3.3.3. Theme #3: Sense of Fulfillment

Another identified effect of coffee, as per the key informants, is that it brings a sense of fulfillment. Completing a cup of coffee can be a small yet significant achievement that augments the sense of progress and accomplishment throughout the day. For many teachers, this routine also provides comfort and normalcy, contributing to their overall well-being. Some of the key informants said that:

"...I have this ritual of drinking coffee every morning, and it is not just waking me up, but coffee gives me a precious moment of peace before the day starts and going to school to face my students". -P8

"...I see consuming coffee as my "little escape" from reality. Those few minutes sipping my favorite coffee allow me to think and reflect on scenarios that happen in my life. With this habit, it gives me a simple happiness". -P10

"...drinking coffee during our break time gives me little time to talk and socialize with my colleagues, and these scenarios of sharing stories, waves of laughter, and problems mean to me a lot". -P2

Drinking coffee brings greater fulfillment as it positively contributes to achieving daily goals. As per the key informants, coffee gives teachers extra comfort despite the workloads, long teaching hours, and other problems that adversely affect their well-being. Broughton et

al. (2017) found that older men's social lives and well-being felt a sense of belongingness as a coffee experience yielded valued fun and enjoyment. Also, another study concluded that an individual who drinks coffee moderately (1-3 cups per day) gives a high level of optimism but not happiness (Qureshi et al., 2022).

4. Conclusion

Coffee is more than just a typical drink. It becomes a regular part of a teacher's daily routine because it helps them stay active and alert at work and has social significance. Therefore, the study used a phenomenological approach to listen to the stories of how much coffee public school teachers consume, what motivates them, and how it influences their daily schedule. Furthermore, these questions were explored and guided by examining the studied phenomenon.

The study reveals that public school teachers consume coffee once, specifically every morning, and some of them two to four times a day. Starting the day with a cup of coffee gives them alertness and focus on becoming the best version of themselves as a professional teacher. Also, the findings show that public school teachers are motivated to consume coffee because of the aroma produced by their favorite coffee; it has good antioxidants and offers a feeling of warmth. However, these motivations changed due to health issues encountered, including increased heartbeat and acid reflux and keeping them awake at night. Despite the health issues, public school teachers still perceive that coffee gives them another energy supply and brings a good mood and a sense of fulfillment.

Hearing the narratives of public-school teachers who are coffee lovers signifies that it is a supporting tool in their professional and personal lives. Several reasons drive them to drink one or more cups of coffee: it provides energy, social interactions, and moments of relaxation. Also, coffee is a catalyst for forming and strengthening the building blocks of colleague relationships. The little time for coffee breaks allows educators to communicate their teaching experiences, strategies, and classroom management practices. Besides teaching-related topics, coffee breaks give teachers time to share their problems and challenges and support each other. Furthermore, this camaraderie built by just drinking coffee can lead to a strong bond of friendship and turn into a family in the teaching community, ultimately for the well-being of the students.

Appreciating the immense value of coffee in the teaching profession stresses the vital importance of crafting healthy and supportive environments that embrace the unique challenges teachers encounter daily. Proactively addressing these needs fosters a more conducive and positive educational atmosphere. It benefits teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders. Ultimately, this benefits not only the teachers but also the students, parents, administrators, policymakers, and all other stakeholders involved in the educational process.

While this study provides valuable inferences and material information about the narratives of public-school teachers regarding the motivation and effect on their daily routine, several limitations are identified by the authors. Firstly, the variation in coffee types, brands, and approaches to preparing the coffee are not considered. Another limitation found by the researchers is the individual differences in caffeine sensitivity of the key informants. The inclusion of genetic variables or other biological markers that may be associated with caffeine metabolism can be done for future studies. Most importantly, there might be a placebo effect on the key informants as they shared their benefits merely based on their experience and expectations, not on the actual benefits of the coffee they drank. Furthermore, injecting other

parameters on why teachers drink coffee and its impact on sleep patterns and quality might produce a solid scholarly study.

The present study could be improved if future researchers addressed the limitations perfectly. They could discuss the varying effects depending on the type, brand, and preparation methods. Also, adding the caffeine sensitivity of the key informants in future studies will provide value-added data to coffee consumers worldwide. Furthermore, exploring another methodology or design for this subject matter will provide valuable data that benefits the coffee's body of knowledge.

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