

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ASATIDZ: DA'WAH TO SAB'R

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Abstract

This quantitative phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of Asatidz teaching in public schools in Negros Occidental, Philippines. The research sought to understand their professional realities by investigating (a) their day-to-day experiences and (b) the challenges they face and the coping strategies they employ. The study's findings reveal a complex professional landscape shaped by deep-seated motivations and significant systemic hurdles. The findings reveal that the experiences of the Asatidz are grouped into five themes: 1) The Spiritual Mandate: Teaching as Da'wah (Mission) and Identity Preservation, 2) The Struggle for Security and Recognition, 3) Pedagogical Resilience: Bridging Gaps with Limited Resources, 4) Sabr (Patience) as a Coping Mechanism, 5) Professional Evolution and Aspiration. In conclusion, the experiences of public school Asatidz are a complex interplay between a profound spiritual calling and the stark realities of systemic neglect. Their perseverance is not merely based on external circumstances but is deeply rooted in their Islamic faith, with Sabr serving as their primary anchor. The study underscores an urgent need for greater institutional integration, financial recognition, and professional support for these educators who play a vital role in preserving cultural identity within the Philippine public education system.

Keywords: *Asatidz, Madrasah, Da'wah, Sabr, lived experiences*

Bio-profiles

Wardaton Jamela M. Magondacan earned her Bachelor of Elementary Education from West Visayas State University. She is currently working as a Teacher I at Graciano Lopez Jaena Elementary School in Bacolod City. With nearly two decades of experience in elementary and Madrasah education since 2006, she has been actively engaged in instruction, values formation, and culturally responsive teaching. Ms. Magondacan has participated in various professional development initiatives, including the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and the Program Implementation Review of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP). She has also been involved in instructional material development, assessment crafting, coaching learners in academic competitions, and serving as a judge in division-level activities. Her exemplary performance earned her recognition as Outstanding Madrasah Teacher at both the division (2022) and district (2023) levels. These professional engagements and experiences have contributed to her commitment to educational excellence and motivated her to pursue this research.



Introduction

Rationale

In recent years, there has been an increase in the global commitment for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) particularly SDG 4 which highlights quality and inclusive education. Central to this effort is the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) to provide Muslim learners with a holistic education. To address this cultural and religious diversity, the Department of Education's (DepEd) Memorandum No. 51, s. 2004 started the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program. Milligan (2020) stated that the program is a critical component in inclusive education for regions with significant Muslim populations. The Madrasah teachers known as Asatidz are key figures in the delivery and success of the program. Being relegated the task to educate Arabic and Quranic studies as well as Islamic values, Sali (2020) pointed out that Asatidz play complex roles which makes it possible to bridge Islamic pedagogy with secular public school system. With such high demands to deliver exceptional performance at a time when support and criticism for Muslims hang in a balance, Asatidz are placed at a crossroads of responsibility and modernization.

Existing studies on ALIVE Program largely concentrated on large scale, systematic challenges. Harad et al. (2022) have carefully detailed practical problems like insufficient funding, lack of uniform teaching materials, and complex logistical issues. These studies may present a wide range of issues, it has diminished Asatidz into mere subjects of educational policy. Qualitative studies such as by Mustapha & Cerna (2025) and Harad et al. (2022) focused on technical aspects such as learning difficulties on Madrasah topics. Sali & Marasigan (2020) noted that there is a dearth in qualitative studies that delve into personal narratives of the front-line actors in Islamic education. Many of these studies do not answer the question on what are these teachers going through especially for the Asatidz in Negros Occidental. Furthermore, other missing information are on possible dual identities, working in a marginalized, difficult environments. Thus, this study sought to address the gap by employing a phenomenological framework.

Having no assessment data through the lens of personal experience, there is a need to for this study as younger Asatidz approached the researcher at times to share and ask for advice. Similar patterns of concerns became apparent and inspired to develop a study to provide an understanding on the plight of Asatidz. Thus, this study explored the experiences, challenges, and coping of the Asatidz in public schools for awareness of the concerned group of people and with the hopes of a better program implementation.

Literature Review

The literature showed a clear divide in the professional lives of Islamic religious educators, known as Madrasah Education teachers popularly called Asatidz. Around the world, teaching was seen not just as a job but as a divine duty (Da'wah) closely tied to preserving Islamic identity and moral development. Both international and local sources point out the contrast between this high spiritual calling and the difficult social and political conditions these educators face. In the Philippines, this tension is even more pronounced. Local studies presented note that while Asatidz are responsible for teaching, they are often excluded from stable employment and work as contractual or as job orders. This short-term employment means they lack job security and benefits, leaving them to carry out their important role while facing ongoing institutional challenges.



Globally, resilience in teaching means being able to adapt to difficult conditions but in the Philippines, this resilience is not just professional but also deeply rooted in faith. Asatidz were able to manage the gap between ambitious education policies and underfunded classrooms by relying on Sab'r (patience). The literature presented described Sab'r as Asatidz active, thoughtful way to cope with stress, not just passive acceptance. In practice, this means educators often use their own limited salaries to pay for classroom needs. As a result, the strength and sacrifices of Asatidz are as equally important to the survival of Madrasah Education Program with that of government support.

The various literature presented the need for review of the MEP implementation in the country. There is a need to level up 21st century teaching standards while cleaving to effective ways in teaching traditional Islamic education. Both globally and locally, evident in the literature and researchers presented, the Asatidz are intrinsically eager to continually keep learning dynamic and improving, yet they are often held back by lack of funding, heavy workloads, and other barriers.

Foreign researches presented also discussed the religious foundations of Islamic education, while local studies focused on the administrative challenges in Philippine schools. However, there is still a lack of in-depth, local researches on how unstable employment affects the daily resilience and spiritual coping of Asatidz. This study sought to fill that gap by exploring the real-life experiences of these educators and presents how they are able to balance their religious mission with the demands of an underfunded, secular school system.

Objectives

This study sought to explore into the lived experiences of Asatidz teaching in public schools in Negros Occidental for the School Year 2025-2026. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: 1) What are the experiences of Asatidz in teaching in public schools? And 2) What are the challenges and coping strategies of Asatidz?

Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design, locale of the study, respondents, data gathering instrument, validity and reliability, data gathering procedure, analytical schemes, and statistical tools.

Research Design

The study explored the experiences of Asatidz teaching in Madrasah Education Program. Qualitative research aimed to understand better and comprehend human interactions and societal processes, and the purpose of phenomenology is to describe and comprehend the essence of individuals lived experiences when they encounter particular phenomena (Lichtman, 2013). In this study, the experiences of Asatidz are central into the making of themes and essence of the experience. Lichtman's practice indicates that qualitative research is fundamentally about understanding lived experiences. Thus, researchers must set aside their own preconceptions to explore how individuals make meaning of their world. The choice of phenomenological research for this study which explores the lived experiences of Asatidz in public schools emphasized that the central purpose of qualitative inquiry to have an in depth understanding of a lived experience from the perspective of those who live it. This makes phenomenology the most appropriate approach in



capturing the complex nuances and often marginalized realities of Asatidz in public education system.

Locale of the Study

For Bacolod City Division, there are seven (7) MEP Implementing Schools where the Asatidz are teaching namely: Graciano Lopez Jaena Elementary School, Apolinario Mabini Elementary School, Crispino V. Ramos Elementary School, Rizal Elementary School, Education & Training Center School I, Education & Training Center School II, and Education & Training Center School III. For San Carlos City Division, Andres Bonifacio Central School and Tandang Sora Elementary School are the two (2) schools where the Asatidz are employed.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study consisted of six (6) elementary school teachers from Divisions of Bacolod City and San Carlos City. Their ages ranged from 25 to 63 years old, reflecting a diverse mix of early-career and seasoned educators. All Madrasah teachers from both divisions were considered to participate in the study.

Data Gathering Instrument

To gather data on the experiences of the participants, a semi structured in-depth interview was utilized. According to Kallio et al (2016) this type of strategy consists of predetermined, open-ended questions which is fundamental in phenomenological research as the researcher has the freedom to probe and explore. This enabled the researcher to ask probing questions and be flexible at the same time as responses may differ from every individual that may need to ask for clarification and additional questions.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data

Trustworthiness is important in any phenomenological approach to ensure that acquisition, processing, and assessment of qualitative data is valid and reliable.

Credibility (Truth Value)

To establish credibility of the data, the researcher established trust and rapport with the participants by putting them at ease at the start of the interview, presenting the goal and process of data gathering, and explaining the informed consent. This led to an empathic response during interviews which could encourage the participants to be open with their experience. After data gathering, the researcher conducted member checking to clarify statements with the participants.

Dependability (Consistency)

Stability of the data to be gathered was addressed through audit trail by utilizing recording devices, turning these recorded data into transcription, using appropriate thematic analysis, going back to the source of data for member checking, and recording of changes in data.

Transferability (Applicability)



To guarantee possible generalization of results, the researcher incorporated thick description of the participants, data gathered, and the findings. Direct quotations or verbatim statements were utilized to support each theme.

Confirmability (Neutrality)

To ensure that the data is objective, aside from member checking, the researcher presented the data and themes to a state university professor with PhD in Psychology whose dissertation utilized phenomenological approach for peer review.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher wrote a formal letter to the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of Bacolod City and San Carlos City asking permission to conduct qualitative research on the lived experiences of Asatidz in Madrasah Education Program implementation. After which, the letter approved by the SDS was presented to the Division ALIVE Focal persons and to the school heads of seven (7) and two (2) MEP implementing schools in Bacolod and San Carlos cities respectively. The researcher then informed and invited the Asatidz to participate in the study and initiated data gathering. An interview guide was prepared, which included identification of biographic information, creation of script for the opening and closing of the interview, and list of guide questions that can lead the interviewer to the possible expected and how to phrase them.

For SDO Bacolod City participants, the interview of the four (4) female Asatidz was conducted at Sum-ag Elementary School's conference room which ensured a secure, air-conditioned room conducive to the researcher and participants. For SDO San Carlos City participants, the researcher travelled to Andres Bonifacio Central School, San Carlos City, Negros Occidental to conduct the one-on one interview with the two (2) males Asatidz.

Prior to each interview, participants were made to sign a consent form, after being informed about the study's purpose, their role in it, how the information would be collected and handled, and the measures in place to ensure confidentiality and privacy. This process also allowed the researcher to build rapport with the participants.

During the interview, the researcher ensured a respectful environment by allowing participants to complete their statements without interruption. To enhance accuracy and mutual understanding, the researcher paraphrased key ideas to validate responses. A guidance counselor was on standby at a safe distance, ready to be beacons by the researcher in case a need for a psychological intervention arose. With a stable emotional construct, each interview ended with no need from the participants to undergo counselling.

After expressing gratitude, the researcher proceeded to transcribe the audio recordings verbatim. For any follow-up questions, subsequent communication was maintained via phone calls and chat messages, adapting to the availability of both the participants and the device owners.

Data analysis commenced immediately after the interviews through an iterative process where emerging insights were drawn from the interviews. The researcher read and re read the transcripts and extracted lines and sentences wherein each was assigned a code. After which, numerous codes were organized into categories by reviewing the patterns of codes, similar and related codes were clustered into categories which were then synthesized into themes.



Research Ethics Protocol

All participants gave informed consent. Their real names were kept private to protect their identities. Data was stored on password-protected computers. An outside licensed psychologist checked the interview process. Participants received a teaching kit as a thank you for joining.

Analytical and Statistical Schemes

Thematic analysis was done using Lichtman's three C's: coding, categorizing, and concepts.

Results and Discussion

This section summarizes the study's findings, which come from careful data gathering, in-depth analysis, and thoughtful interpretation. After this, meaningful conclusions were drawn from the initial phase, offering valuable insights

Level of Learners' Interest in Indoor and Outdoor Physical Activities

Table 1

Level of Learners' Interest in Indoor Physical Activities

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a learner,		
1. I prefer exercising indoors to outdoors.	3.34	Moderate Level
2. I prefer a temperature-controlled environment.	3.68	High Level
3. I prefer expanded playing times.	3.62	High Level
4. I prefer space for a lower risk of injury and convenience.	3.95	High Level
5. I prefer physical activity with fewer rules.	3.60	High Level
6. I prefer a PA that can be performed inside the classroom.	3.28	Moderate Level
7. I like PA, which can be combined with traditional pencil and paper activities.	3.32	Moderate Level
Overall Mean	3.54	High Level

Table 1 displays the respondents' level of interest in physical activities in the area of indoor activities. The respondents believe their level of interest in physical activities is high. This is indicated in the overall mean of 3.54.

Moreover, it shows that item 4, which is "I prefer space for a lower risk of injury and convenience," obtained the highest mean of 3.95 with a high level. Although most of the items in this area yielded high-level results, it can be seen that item 6, which is "I prefer PA that can be performed inside the classroom," obtained the lowest mean of 3.28, indicating a moderate level of agreement. This suggests that although the respondents strongly agree with PAs conducted indoors, they are less interested in PAs conducted in their classrooms. This can be because classrooms are small areas with furniture, such as chairs and tables, that make it difficult for students to move about.

This finding suggests that every indoor space intended for PA should be engaging, welcoming, and visually appealing. This study emphasizes that "convenience" factors, which include



the requirement for a proportionate design where space may be constrained, should also be subject to risk evaluations, as they are just as essential as the actual space.

The study by Yambao (2016) supports this, showing that to attain and sustain students' physical activity, the physical activity environment should be favorable for raising students' interest and satisfaction. Medina (2020) echoes this point, saying that when students have enjoyable PA experiences, they are more likely to learn important lessons and that these positive experiences result in stronger attitudes about PA and, ultimately, stronger engagement.

Table 2

Level of Learners' Interest in Outdoor Physical Activities

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a learner,		
1. I prefer exercising outdoors to indoors.	4.55	High Level
2. I prefer moderate to vigorous physical activities.	3.40	Moderate Level
3. I enjoy the experience of change in nature (light, dark, sun-rain).	4.05	High Level
4. I enjoy the view of nature while exercising.	4.36	High Level
5. I enjoy the fresh air.	4.75	Very High Level
6. I enjoy open spaces.	4.57	Very High Level
7. I enjoy PA, which allows free movement	4.30	High Level
Overall Mean	4.14	High Level

Table 2 illustrates the learners' level of interest in physical activities according to the outdoor area. The overall mean for this area is 4.14, which is considered high.

The data also show that item 5, which states "I enjoy the fresh air," attained the highest mean of 4.75, indicating a high level. On the other hand, item 2, which pertains to "I prefer moderate to vigorous physical activities," yielded the lowest mean of 3.40, indicating a moderate level. It implies that the respondents prefer light physical activities since they risk heat exhaustion and dehydration from the burning sun when they engage in their PA outside.

Learners should be given a variety of options in tailoring their physical activities. For all parts of the spectrum, kinds of PA that can inspire and enable learners to be physically active as they wish are a valuable community asset. Thus, innovative approaches are advocated to remove barriers to participation and are proportionate and appropriate to the learner's needs.

The findings were supported by Abell and Lederman (2017), who concluded that many outdoor PAs are found to be more valuable and impactful to students' interest in PA compared to indoor PAs in schools.

Level of Motivation of Learners in Physical Activities According to Intrinsic and Extrinsic Domains

Table 3

Level of Learners' Motivation in Physical Activities based on Intrinsic Domain

Items	Mean	Interpretation
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As a learner,

1. I enjoy participating in physical activities.	3.98	High Level
2. I consider physical activities important and beneficial for my health and lifestyle.	4.33	High Level
3. I feel good about myself if I do physical activities.	4.16	High Level
4. I believe that physical activity helps my image.	4.22	High Level
5. I like to discover and master new training techniques.	4.07	High Level
6. I enjoy bonding with loved ones and creating long-lasting memories.	4.38	High Level
7. I challenge myself to go out of my comfort zone.	3.86	High Level
Overall Mean	4.14	High Level

Table 3 presents the overall level of motivation of learners in physical activities in the area of intrinsic motivation, which obtained a mean of 4.14 (High Level).

Moreover, the data also show that item 6, which states "I enjoy bonding with loved ones and creating long-lasting memories," obtained the highest mean of 4.38, indicating a high level of agreement. On the other hand, item 7, which states that "I challenge myself to go out of my comfort zone," obtained the lowest mean of 3.86 (High Level). This means that the respondents do not need to challenge themselves just to be motivated to participate in physical activities. This suggests that the PA participation of the respondents is based on their ability to recognize that the physical activities in their locales are appealing and that they create pleasurable outcomes and personal satisfaction for them.

PA is a deeply affective emotional activity. It assumes the spectrum of emotions in PA ranges from joy and feelings of empowerment that can come from active games. Thus, acknowledging this aspect of emotion and its significance to a full range is therefore indispensable in understanding PA in a rounded fashion.

The findings of this study are supported by the study of Molanorouzi et al. (2015), who have shown that intrinsic motivation is a decisive factor in maintaining PA participation. Thus, understanding the internal motives that influence learners' participation in physical activity is critical for developing interventions to promote higher levels of involvement.

Table 4

Level of Learners' Motivation in Physical Activities based on Extrinsic Domain

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a learner,		
1. I feel that others like me better when I am in shape.	3.50	High Level
2. I am challenged when others make me do it to pressure others.	3.12	Moderate Level
3. I want others to acknowledge that I am doing what I have been told I should do.	3.67	High Level
4. I am excited when I get rewards.	4.38	High Level
5. I feel that others would be angry at me if I did not do it.	3.64	High Level
6. I find increased participation among my classmates and class positivity.	3.76	High Level
7. I need physical activity for status or approval from family or friends.	3.56	High Level
Overall Mean	3.66	High Level



Table 4 presents the results of the learners' level of motivation in physical activities in the extrinsic area. Generally, learners' motivation levels in physical activities in this area are high (mean = 3.66).

The data also illustrate that item 4, stating that "I am excited when I get rewards," obtained the highest mean of 4.38 (a high level). However, item 2, stating that "I am challenged when others make me do it to pressure others," obtained the lowest mean of 3.12 (moderate level). They are self-motivated and eager to succeed.

The implication of this in the locales is that the concept of extrinsic motivation can be promoted among students by designing motivational climates that support participation in PA.

The results of the current study align with those of White et al. (2020), who suggest that individuals can be disaffected or uninvolved in PA due to their interaction with social environments (extrinsic), which can influence or hinder their participation.

Relational Analysis Between the Level of Motivation and the Level of Interest of Learners in Physical Activities

Table 5

Relationship Between the Level of Motivation and the Level of Interest of Learners in Physical Activities

Variable	rho	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Motivation	0.618	0.000	0.05	Significant
Interest				

Table 5 presents a significant positive relationship between the level of motivation and the level of interest in physical activities among learners ($\rho = 0.618$, $p = 0.000$, $\alpha = 0.05$). The computed p-value is lower than the set level of significance, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between the level of motivation and the level of interest in physical activities among learners, is rejected. This implies that motivation is significantly associated with learners' interest, such that higher levels of motivation correspond to higher levels of interest in engaging in physical activities. This finding is consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which posits that motivated individuals are more likely to develop sustained interest and active engagement in physical activities (Deci & Ryan, 2020). The result is supported by Zakaria, Adiman, and Nurbait (2020), who found that students' learning motivation significantly influenced their interest in physical education, indicating that motivated learners exhibit greater enthusiasm and participation. Similarly, Prieto-González et al. (2020) reported that intrinsic motivation significantly predicted students' interest and adherence to physical activity across different cultural settings. Moreover, Chen et al. (2014) emphasized that motivation grounded in interest is a strong predictor of learners' engagement in physical activities both inside and outside the school setting. Recent evidence from Liu et al. (2022) further underscores that interest serves as a mediating factor between motivational support and actual participation in physical activity. Overall, the findings of the present study corroborate existing literature, underscoring the importance of enhancing learners' motivation to increase their interest and sustained participation in physical activities.



Theme 1: The Spiritual Mandate - Teaching as Da'wah and Identity Preservation

Asatidz viewed teaching not as a job but as a religious mission. Participant 2 stated: “*Gina full force ko ang pagtuturo ... para hindi mawala yung identity nila bilang Muslim*” (I teach full force so their Muslim identity is not lost). Participant 6 recounted how seeing children unaware of Allah moved him to teach.

This sense of *da'wah* (invitation to Islam) was reinforced by *gratitude as obligation*. Participant 2 described teaching as “*time to pay back*” because the Madrasah program enabled her own children to study. Participant 3 reflected: “*Maybe my calling is to teach... I need to accept what Allah gave me.*”

Consistent with Redocto and Sumayo (2024) and Sali and Ancho (2021), Asatidz frame teaching as *da'wah* and *sadaqah jariyah* (continuous charity). This theological reframing, viewing delayed salaries as tests of *sab'r* which sustains their resilience. However, as Nor et al. (2024) cautioned, this same spirituality can mask structural failures. When teachers accept poverty as divine will, institutions face less pressure to reform. The risk is spiritual bypass: individual meaning-making substituting for collective justice.

Theme 2: The Struggle for Security and Recognition

Financial fragility. Salaries (₱12,500/month) were delayed for months. Participant 1 called this “*one of the most painful experiences.*” Participant 6 feared advocating for pay: “*Baka malaman ng DepEd tapos sabihin nilang gusto niya ng sweldo pero hindi ang pagtuturo*” (DepEd might think I want salary, not teaching).

Performative visibility. Despite “part-time” designation, Asatidz worked full days and performed ancillary tasks. Participant 2: “*Supposed to be part-time, but actually whole day teaching.*” Participant 3 helped in the office without extra pay.

The “part-time” fiction obscures full-time work, echoing Cahilog et al. (2023) and Diomampo and Quines (2023). Asatidz perform ancillary tasks, buy supplies, and feed students, labor that is neither compensated nor recognized. This aligns with broader patterns in Philippine public education, where teacher dedication is systematically exploited.

Theme 3: Pedagogical Resilience - Bridging Gaps with Limited Resources

Multi-grade teaching. One teacher handled Kinder to Grade 6 in one room. Participant 2: “*I need to find a way na wala may ga ka left behind*” (so no one is left behind). Learning levels varied wildly, some Grade 6 students did not know Arabic alphabets, while some Grade 1 students excelled.

Linguistic gymnastics. Teachers code-switched among English, Filipino, Hiligaynon, Maranao, Cebuano, and Arabic. Participant 3: “*I need to adjust my medium of instruction.*” Participant 2: “*Parang lahat ng language ginagamit ko*” (I use every language).

Lack of instructional materials and technology. Participant 1: “*Number one challenge is limited learning resources.*” Tablets given by DepEd were later taken back. Participant 3 had no computer or laptop.

Subsidized instruction. Teachers spent personal money on food, tricycle fare, hijabs, and tutobs. Participant 5 described ordering 15 hijabs from Shopee using her own money, washing them herself to prevent loss.

Multi-grade, multilingual instruction demands extraordinary skill, yet Asatidz receive no specialized training. Their code-switching and differentiated instruction are innovations born of necessity, not professional development (Redocto & Sumayo, 2024). The absence of digital tools excludes them from 21st-century education reforms.



Theme 4: Sab'r (Patience) as a Coping Mechanism

Theological reframing. Participants reinterpreted hardship as divine test. Participant 6: *“Always lang magkaroon ng sab'r and iklas”* (always have patience and sincerity). Participant 4: *“I accept what Allah gave me.”*

The “Tita” network. Informal support from senior female colleagues provided practical and emotional guidance. Participant 3: *“I'm asking help sa mga teacher naupod ko and also to my titas”* (co-teachers and aunts).

Peer support compensates for institutional failure. This finding parallels Versfeld et al. (2025), who documented similar informal networks among teachers in low- and middle-income countries. While vital, such networks should supplement and not replace formal support systems.

Theme 5: Professional Evolution and Aspiration

The credentialist divide. Younger Asatidz pursued Licensed Professional Teacher (LPT) status. Participant 3 proudly stated: *“I am a licensed professional teacher... first take.”*

The relevance gap. General DepEd trainings (INSET) did not address Madrasah-specific needs. Participant 2 argued: *“Dapat may INSET sa madrasah... ang mag lecture sa aton mga aleem”* (there should be INSET for Madrasah, lectured by scholars). One participant successfully transitioned to regular teacher status after 18 months.

Younger Asatidz pursue LPT status for legitimacy, yet general INSET does not address Islamic pedagogy. This relevance gap (Sali, 2023) suggests that professionalization efforts must be culturally and religiously grounded, not merely aligned with secular standards.

Conclusion

Asatidz in Philippine public schools live with both deep spiritual satisfaction and serious financial insecurity. They help keep Muslim identity alive through da'wah, show patience through sab'r, and depend on informal 'Tita' networks for support. But this strength can also allow the system to ignore their needs. Without changes like fair pay, special training, and enough resources, the Madrasah Education Program could lose its most committed teachers.

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Conflict of Interest

The researcher declares that there is no conflict of interest in this study. Participants were not coerced and were compensated from personal fund of the researcher. The study is not funded by any public or private institution.



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