
TEACHER AUTONOMY IN RELATION TO JOB COMMITMENT: A QUANTITATIVE INVESTIGATION

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2. ABSTRACT

This quantitative study examined teacher autonomy in relation to job commitment among 283 Grade 3 elementary school teachers from the municipalities of Arakan, Antipas, Magpet, and President Roxas, Province of Cotabato, for the school year 2025–2026. Employing a descriptive-correlational design, data were gathered using a self-developed and validated questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha: .929 and .935) and analyzed using weighted mean, Spearman rho correlation, and multiple linear regression. Findings revealed that teachers highly practiced autonomy in all four dimensions: freedom to choose teaching methods (WM=4.73), flexibility to adapt the curriculum (WM=4.69), autonomy in classroom management (WM=4.72), and control over professional development choices (WM=4.58). Job commitment was equally high across all dimensions: participation in school and community activities (WM=4.68), emotional attachment to school and students (WM=4.66), perseverance despite challenges (WM=4.65), and willingness to go beyond required duties (WM=4.43). Spearman rho confirmed a highly significant positive relationship between all autonomy dimensions and all job commitment dimensions ($p < 0.01$). Multiple regression analyses revealed that autonomy in teaching methods, curriculum adaptation, and professional development choices predicted willingness to go beyond duties; classroom management autonomy and professional development control predicted participation and emotional attachment; while curriculum flexibility, classroom management autonomy, and professional development control jointly predicted perseverance despite challenges. These findings establish teacher autonomy as a critical correlate and predictor of job commitment in the Philippine public elementary school setting.

KEYWORDS: *Teacher Autonomy, Job Commitment, Descriptive-Correlational, Spearman Rho, Multiple Regression, Elementary Teachers, Philippines.*

4. INTRODUCTION

In schools today, teachers face increasing expectations to deliver quality education while coping with various challenges such as heavy workloads, strict policies, and limited involvement in important decisions. Despite their crucial role in shaping students' learning, many teachers feel they lack sufficient control over their work, which may affect their commitment to the profession. Teacher autonomy—the ability of educators to make their own decisions regarding instructional methods, classroom management, and professional development—has been positively linked to professional motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment (Nguyen et al., 2022; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020).

Several studies have explored how teacher autonomy is associated with performance, motivation, and well-being. Torres (2021) revealed that teachers with higher levels of autonomy tend to achieve increased job satisfaction and professional commitment. Cansoy and Parlar (2021) similarly found that when teacher autonomy is practiced, engagement and dedication improve. However, there has been scant research into how teacher autonomy directly relates to teachers' job commitment, particularly in the Philippine context. This study addressed that gap by examining the level of teacher autonomy, the level of job commitment, the relationship between these constructs, and the influence of autonomy dimensions on each facet of job commitment among Grade 3 teachers in four municipalities of Cotabato Province.

5. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

A descriptive-correlational design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was employed to describe the levels of teacher autonomy and job commitment and to determine the relationship and influence of teacher autonomy on job commitment.

Participants

A total of 283 Grade 3 elementary school teachers were selected through purposive sampling from four municipalities: Antipas (n=59), Arakan (n=62), Magpet (n=78), and President Roxas (n=84). Inclusion criteria required current employment as a Grade 3 teacher in the target municipalities, a minimum of one year of teaching experience, and willingness to participate.

Research Instrument

A two-part self-developed questionnaire was used. Part I assessed Teacher Autonomy ($\alpha=.929$) across four dimensions (freedom to choose teaching methods, flexibility to adapt the curriculum, autonomy in classroom management, control over professional development choices), with each comprising five items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Least Practiced to 5=Highly Practiced). Part II assessed Job Commitment ($\alpha=.935$) across four dimensions (willingness to go beyond required duties, participation in school and community activities, emotional attachment to school and students, perseverance despite challenges), similarly structured.

Statistical Analysis

Weighted means described the levels of both variables. Spearman rho correlation assessed the magnitude and direction of relationships between autonomy and commitment dimensions. Multiple linear regression identified the significant predictors of each commitment dimension from among the four autonomy dimensions (Skinner et al., 2024).

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Teacher Autonomy

All four autonomy dimensions were rated as highly practiced. Freedom to choose teaching methods registered the highest mean (WM=4.73), followed by autonomy in classroom management (WM=4.72), flexibility to adapt the curriculum (WM=4.69), and control over professional development choices (WM=4.58). These findings indicate that teachers in the study area exercise strong professional autonomy across all measured dimensions.

Table 1. Level of Teacher Autonomy.

Teacher Autonomy Dimension	Weighted Mean	Description
Freedom to Choose Teaching Methods	4.73	Highly Practiced
Flexibility to Adapt the Curriculum	4.69	Highly Practiced
Autonomy in Classroom Management	4.72	Highly Practiced
Control over Professional Development Choices	4.58	Highly Practiced

The high rating for instructional autonomy aligns with Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who emphasized that effective teaching involves adapting instruction to students' diverse needs. The strong scores for curriculum flexibility reflect UNESCO's (2020) finding that culturally responsive, contextualized teaching improves comprehension and engagement. Classroom

management autonomy results conform with Emmer and Sabornie (2020), who demonstrated that responsive management reduces behavioral problems and supports learning outcomes.

Level of Teachers' Job Commitment

All four commitment dimensions were rated as highly committed. Participation in school and community activities was highest (WM=4.68), followed by emotional attachment to school and students (WM=4.66), perseverance despite challenges (WM=4.65), and willingness to go beyond required duties (WM=4.43).

Table 2. Level of Teachers' Job Commitment.

Job Commitment Dimension	Weighted Mean	Description
Willingness to Go Beyond Required Duties	4.43	Highly Committed
Participation in School and Community Activities	4.68	Highly Committed
Emotional Attachment to School and Students	4.66	Highly Committed
Perseverance Despite Challenges	4.65	Highly Committed

These results align with Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2021), who noted that teachers' commitment and extra effort positively influence student learning and academic success. The high perseverance scores support Beltman et al. (2020), who underscored that teacher resilience is crucial for sustaining effectiveness despite challenging conditions.

Relationship between Teacher Autonomy and Job Commitment

Spearman rho analysis confirmed highly significant positive relationships between all autonomy dimensions and all job commitment dimensions ($p < 0.01$). Notable correlations include: control over professional development choices with emotional attachment ($r = 0.489$), control over professional development choices with willingness to go beyond duties ($r = 0.471$), freedom to choose teaching methods with willingness to go beyond duties ($r = 0.469$), and autonomy in classroom management with emotional attachment ($r = 0.456$). Curriculum flexibility showed the lowest correlations overall but remained significant across all commitment dimensions.

Table 3. Spearman Rho Correlation Matrix: Teacher Autonomy and Job Commitment.****p<0.01**

Teacher Autonomy	Beyond Duties	Participation	Emotional Attach.	Perseverance
Freedom to Choose Teaching Methods	0.469**	0.260**	0.412**	0.299**
Flexibility to Adapt Curriculum	0.419**	0.361**	0.401**	0.376**
Autonomy in Classroom Management	0.451**	0.378**	0.456**	0.401**
Control over Prof. Dev. Choices	0.471**	0.434**	0.489**	0.385**

Influence of Teacher Autonomy on Job Commitment

Multiple regression confirmed significant collective influence of teacher autonomy on all commitment dimensions. For willingness to go beyond duties (F=35.887, p=0.000, R²=0.340), freedom to choose teaching methods, curriculum flexibility, and professional development control emerged as significant predictors. For participation in school and community activities (F=21.516, p=0.000, R²=0.236), classroom management autonomy and professional development control were significant predictors. For emotional attachment to school and students (F=31.746, p=0.000, R²=0.313), classroom management autonomy and professional development control were significant predictors. For perseverance despite challenges (F=102.353, p=0.000, R²=0.499), curriculum flexibility, classroom management autonomy, and professional development control were all significant predictors.

Table 4. Multiple Regression: Influence of Teacher Autonomy on Job Commitment.****p<0.01**

Job Dimension	Commitment	Significant Predictors	R ²	F-value	p
Willingness to Go Beyond Duties		Teaching Methods; Curriculum; Prof. Dev.	0.340	35.887	0.000**
Participation in Activities		Classroom Mgmt; Prof. Dev.	0.236	21.516	0.000**
Emotional Attachment		Classroom Mgmt; Prof. Dev.	0.313	31.746	0.000**
Perseverance Despite Challenges		Curriculum; Classroom Mgmt; Prof. Dev.	0.499	102.353	0.000**

The consistent significance of professional development control across all commitment dimensions aligns with Worth (2020), who highlighted that perceived influence over professional development goal-setting is closely linked to higher job satisfaction and intention to remain in the profession. The strong influence of classroom management autonomy corroborates Collie and Martin (2024), who found that discretion in managing the classroom is linked with higher levels of teacher commitment.

7. CONCLUSION

This study confirmed that teacher autonomy is a highly significant correlate and predictor of job commitment among Grade 3 public elementary school teachers in Arakan Valley, Cotabato. Teachers demonstrated high levels of both autonomy and commitment. All autonomy dimensions were positively and significantly correlated with all commitment dimensions, with control over professional development choices and autonomy in classroom management emerging as the most consistent and strongest predictors across commitment domains. The influence of curriculum flexibility on perseverance underscores the value of adaptive teaching in sustaining resilience. These findings support Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) by confirming that supporting teachers' autonomy needs strengthens their professional dedication. School leaders and policymakers should prioritize creating environments where teachers feel trusted to make instructional, managerial, and professional development decisions, as doing so directly enhances their commitment to students, schools, and the broader educational mission.

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