Mismatched Teachers' Experiences in Public Junior High Schools: A Phenomenological Research

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Abstract: Mismatched teachers' experiences in Public Junior High Schools: A Phenomenological Research. Objectives: This research aimed to describe the mismatched teachers' experiences who have shared the phenomenon of teaching non-related subjects for approximately two or more years in ten public junior high schools in Jambi City. More specifically, this study explored their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in dealing with professional mismatches. **Methods:** This qualitative research utilized a transcendental phenomenological design, purposeful participant sampling, and interviews as the primary data collection. Moreover, the constant comparative method was used by the researcher to analyze the interviewing data in this research. **Findings:** The findings identified three major themes: belief in God, unsolvable problems, and receiving and giving regarding the mismatched teachers' experiences in teaching non-related subjects in the current schools. This research found that belief in God played a central role in motivating teachers to persevere despite difficulties. Teachers also encountered systemic challenges, including a lack of administrative support, inadequate teaching materials, and mismatched recruitment policies. However, many teachers developed strategies to manage classroom challenges, student engagement, and discipline. Additionally, receiving and giving emerged as a crucial aspect of their professional lives, where teachers sought support from peers, administrators, and personal faith while also mentoring new teachers. **Conclusion:** There were three significant themes; believe in God, unsolvable problems, and receiving and giving discovered in this research. These themes represent their emotional, professional, and institutional issues faced by mismatched teachers. These findings suggest the need for policy improvements, such as targeted professional development, access to appropriate teaching resources, and better recruitment practices to support mismatched teachers. Recognizing their dedication and struggles can lead to more effective educational policies that enhance teacher well-being and student outcomes. While mismatched teachers exhibit resilience and adaptability, addressing their challenges is essential to maintain educational quality in public schools.

Keywords: phenomenological research, mismatched teachers.

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■ INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping a nation's future, and the quality of teaching directly impacts student learning outcomes. However, Indonesia faces a persistent challenge: mismatched teaching, where teachers are assigned to teach subjects outside their academic qualifications. This issue is prevalent in public

junior high schools, especially in rural and underdeveloped areas, where shortages of subject-specialized teachers often lead to sub-optimal teacher placement.

Indonesia continues to be plagued with a high number of teachers who are not qualified to teach subjects "Out-of-field" teaching (mismatched teaching), teaching a subject without specific training in that subject, has for many years been a taboo practice as teachers' experiences, but few have spoken up about it due to its ubiquity. As a result, until recently little attention had been given to the effects of out-of-field teaching on teacher well-being and retention, and student attainment and participation.

Studying the experiences of mismatched teachers, those assigned to teach subjects outside their areas of expertise, is crucial for several reasons, particularly in the context of education in Indonesia. Here are some detailed points highlighting the importance of this research.; by studying mismatched teachers, we can identify gaps in teacher preparation and support systems that need to be addressed to enhance educational quality, understanding the challenges faced by mismatched teachers can inform policies and practices aimed at improving teacher retention. For instance, if teachers feel unsupported in their roles, they may leave the profession altogether, exacerbating the existing shortage of qualified teachers (Ingersoll, 2001), and studying their experiences can highlight the inequities in the education system and inform strategies to ensure that all students, regardless of their location, receive a high-quality education. This is particularly important in a diverse country like Indonesia, where cultural and regional differences can impact educational outcomes.

Mismatched teaching will not go away immediately, even with funded programs for increasing the supply of teachers. However, with targeted funding for retraining, professional development programs, and mentoring of less specialized teachers, it would be possible to provide opportunities for committed teachers to extend their teaching expertise and maintain high-quality teaching. It would reposition out-of-field teaching from a negative to a chance for professional expansion.

Despite no consistent relationship between student achievement and teacher qualifications, several studies have shown that highly effective teachers have a deep understanding of the subjects they teach (Allen & de Weert, 2007; Khan et al,. 2012). They value the subject, and students engage with the subject at a deep level.

Although mismatched teachers teaching non-related subjects wish to positively impact and serve their communities, the problem is they experience a high level of stressors that present a challenge to their ability to be effective. While the stressors to be dealt with are considerable for educators in general (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Schaefer et al., 2012), they are particularly intense for those teaching in public schools (Finnigan & Daly, 2012; Huisman et al., 2010).

Research has shown mismatched teachers can be concerned about the negative impact their teaching might have on student learning, such as lower achievement scores. They have also shown concern that they cannot demonstrate content is relevant to everyday life. It ultimately remained that poor or mismatched recruitment can result in missed opportunities and performance and can severely damage the organizational reputation (Khan et al., 2012).

There are many previous related studies of mismatch cases conducted by researchers in non-educational and educational settings. The mismatch issue was already discussed a long time ago but there is still no study discussing mismatched teachers' experiences in teaching non-related subjects. Based on the recent studies reviewed, here are the key findings related to teacher mismatches in Indonesia; (1) Curriculum constraints, institutional policies, and student

abilities lead to discrepancies between what teachers believe is best and what they actually practice ((Rachmawati & Cahyono, 2021), (2)Teachers face challenges with content knowledge, pedagogy, and language proficiency, leading to difficulties in delivering lessons effectively ((Fauzi & Amalia, 2022), (3) A significant portion of Indonesian teachers are assigned to subjects outside their expertise due to teacher shortages and policy misalignment (Rachmat & Suryadarma,2024). These studies provide valuable insights into the issue of mismatched teachers in Indonesia, including policy-related challenges, instructional difficulties, and employment trends.

There exists a lack of empirical research addressing the experiences of mismatched teachers who are the heartbeat of teaching non-related subjects in public junior high schools in Jambi City. Hence, this transcendental phenomenological study aimed to describe the mismatched teachers' experiences who teach non-related subjects in public junior high schools in Jambi City. The theory guiding this research was the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000; 2008). With this theory, the researchers worked to determine mismatched teachers' experiences focused on the essence of the meaning of being mismatched teachers in the current schools. More specifically, this research emphasized the impact of mismatched teachers on students' achievements. It ultimately remained that poor or mismatched recruitment can result in missed opportunities and performance and can severely damage the organizational reputation (Khan et al., 2012). One overarching research question was designed to fulfill the purpose of this research. The central question was, *what are the mismatched teachers' experiences in teaching nonrelated subjects?.*

Although numerous studies have explored the general effects of mismatched teaching, few studies have examined the lived experiences of mismatched teachers in Indonesia. There is a lack of empirical research addressing how mismatched teachers cope with their challenges. This research seeks to address the gap in literature by exploring the lived experiences of mismatched teachers in public junior high schools in Jambi City. Using a phenomenological approach, the study aims to understand how teachers navigate the challenges of teaching non-related subjects, their coping mechanisms, and the institutional support systems available to them. The findings will provide valuable insights for educational policymakers and school administrators to develop better recruitment strategies, targeted professional development programs, and policies that improve teacher placement. By shedding light on the experiences, struggles, and strategies of mismatched teachers, this research contributes to enhancing teacher well-being, improving instructional quality, and ensuring better educational outcomes for Indonesian students.

Identifying the novelty and gaps of this research on mismatched teachers in Jambi City is crucial for establishing the significance of our study. Some potential areas of novelty and gaps that may not have been extensively explored by other researchers include; (1) Local Context. While there may be studies on mismatched teachers in broader contexts, our research can provide specific insights into the unique educational, cultural, and socio-economic factors affecting teachers in Jambi City. This localized focus can reveal how regional characteristics influence the experiences and challenges of mismatched teachers. (2) Spirituality and Well-Being. Investigating the role of spiritual beliefs and practices among mismatched teachers in Jambi City as a coping mechanism for stress is a relatively underexplored area. While some studies may touch on spirituality in education, a focused examination of how spirituality specifically aids mismatched teachers in coping with their unique challenges can fill a significant gap. (3) Local

Policy Analysis: Our research can analyze the implications of mismatched teacher assignments on local educational policies in Jambi City. By providing specific recommendations based on our findings, we can contribute to the development of more effective teacher assignment policies that consider local needs and contexts.

■ METHOD

Participants

The research was conducted at ten junior high schools in Jambi city where mismatched teachers were assigned to teach subjects outside their areas of expertise. This research specifically focused on teachers who had been teaching non-related subjects for a significant period, allowing for a deeper exploration of their experiences. A purposeful sampling with a convenience case strategy sampling was used to select the participants of this research (Robinson, 2024), meaning that participants were chosen based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in this research. Purposeful sampling is a widely used technique in qualitative research that enables researchers to intentionally select individuals who have firsthand experience with the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This technique ensures that the selected participants provide rich, relevant, and insightful data based on their personal and professional experiences.

The participants in this research were carefully selected based on a set of predefined criteria to ensure that their experiences accurately represented the phenomenon of mismatched teaching in Indonesian public junior high schools. The criteria were; 1) Participants were selected from various disciplines, ensuring a diverse representation of mismatched teaching across different subjects, including Science teachers assigned to teach mathematics, Physical education teachers teaching social studies, and Language teachers assigned to teach moral or religious studies. 2) To capture meaningful insights into the experiences of mismatched teachers, participants were required to have at least two years of experience teaching a subject outside their area of expertise. This criterion ensured that the teachers had sufficient exposure to the challenges and coping mechanisms associated with their mismatched assignments. Teachers with longer-term experience (5–10 years) were also included to explore longitudinal effects, such as burnout, professional adaptation, and evolving teaching strategies. 3) Given the qualitative nature of the study, participants were selected based on their willingness to engage in in-depth interviews and share their personal experiences regarding mismatched teaching. 4) The research was conducted in ten public junior high schools in Jambi City, covering a range of school settings (urban, suburban, and semi-rural areas). This allowed for a comprehensive view of how mismatched teaching affects educators in different educational environments, considering factors such as availability of teaching resources, level of administrative support, student demographics and learning needs. This expanded participant selection section ensures that the research effectively captures the complex experiences of mismatched teachers while providing practical recommendations for improving Indonesia's education system.

Research Design

This research was qualitative and employed a transcendental phenomenological design. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), the founder of phenomenology as a philosophical approach, mentioned that phenomenology provides a deep understanding of 'live experience' by several individuals. Moreover, Merriam (1998), Moustakas (1994), and Patton (2002) agreed that a phenomenological approach aims to understand how one or more individuals experience a phenomenon and to explore in-depth accounts of experiences from participants'

personal reflections and perspectives on the phenomenon.

This research aimed to explore the experiences of mismatched teachers in secondary schools. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with selected teachers, allowing them to share their challenges, strategies, and adaptations in teaching subjects outside their expertise. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained, and participants were informed about the purpose of the study. Informed consent was secured to ensure voluntary participation.

Research Instruments

This study employed in depth face-to-face interview as the primary data collection instrument. In-depth interviews allow researchers to gain a richer understanding of the subjective experiences of mismatched teachers who teach subjects outside their academic backgrounds. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative interviews provide participants with the opportunity to share their perspectives in a flexible and interactive setting.

The interview guide was developed based on a review of relevant literature on teacher mismatches and qualitative research methodologies. The guide was structured to include; (1) Demographic Questions: These covered participants' backgrounds, including their teaching experience, academic qualifications, and the subjects they were assigned to teach. (2) Main Thematic Questions: These were open-ended questions designed to explore key aspects such as the challenges teachers face when teaching outside their expertise, the strategies they use to cope with these challenges, and their experiences with professional development and institutional support. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, allowing for flexibility in responses while ensuring key themes were covered and conducted in person, enabling

researchers to observe non-verbal cues and clarify responses in real time.

Before the main data collection, the interview guide was pilot-tested with a small group of teachers to refine the clarity of the questions and improve the overall structure. The feedback from the pilot phase helped ensure that the questions were relevant and elicited rich, meaningful responses. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes. Participants were encouraged to speak freely, ensuring a comfortable and open discussion environment. By voluntary participation, they were informed that they could withdraw at any stage without consequences.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used by the researcher to analyze the interviewing data followed by thematic analysis across the cases to find out the similarities and differences of the findings, as well as interpretation of the meaning of the case to uncover the essence of mismatched teachers' experiences (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1996). To ensure credibility and trustworthiness (the term of validity in qualitative) of this research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), several validation techniques were implemented; (1) Member Checking: Participants reviewed transcripts and interpretations to confirm the accuracy of their responses. (2) Prolonged Engagement: Repeated interactions with participants allowed for deeper exploration and verification of findings (Creswell, 1997; Merriam, 1998). (3) Rich and Thick Descriptions: Detailed narratives were provided to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the context and experiences of the participants. (4) Participant Triangulation: Data were validated by cross-referencing responses from different participants to confirm consistency and reliability. By

employing these methods, the study ensured a rigorous and in-depth analysis of the challenges, coping strategies, and perspectives of mismatched teachers.

In this study, procedure for qualitative data analysis by using the constant comparative method included; (1) preparation of data. Researchers transcribed all interviews and focus group discussions verbatim to ensure accuracy, and read through the transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the content and context. (2) Initial coding. Researchers began with open coding by identifying and labeling concepts, themes, or patterns in the data. This involves breaking down the data into discrete parts and assigning codes to these parts, and wrote memos to capture thoughts, insights, and reflections on the codes and their meanings. (3) Comparative analysis. Researchers compared new data with existing codes and categories. Each piece of data is compared against previously coded data to identify similarities and differences, and refined codes by merging similar codes, splitting codes that are too broad, or creating new codes as necessary. (4) Category development. Researchers identified major themes that emerge from the categories. This helps in understanding the overarching narratives within the data. (5) Final analysis and reporting. Researchers prepared a detailed report that includes methodology, findings, and interpretations, ensuring to provide rich descriptions and quotes from participants to support the analysis. (6) Reflection and iteration. Researchers considered the implications of the findings and the analysis process itself. Reflect on any biases or assumptions that may have influenced the analysis. By following these steps, researchers can effectively utilize the constant comparative method to analyze qualitative data, ensuring a thorough and systematic approach to understanding participants' experiences.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' learning experiences, yet many educators find themselves assigned to subjects outsides their areas of expertise -a phenomenon knows as teacher mismatching. This issue has significant implications for both teaching effectiveness and students outcomes. This study explored the experiences of mismatched teachers, focusing on three major findings; believe in God, unsolvable problems, and receiving and giving. Each theme was presented as follows.

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Believe in God	1. Calling
	2. Gifting
	3. Sending:
	a. The school policy
	b. Freedom
2. Unsolvable problems	1. Unsolvable Problems
	2. Problem Solvers:
	a. Classroom discipline
	b. Engaging student in learning
3. Receiving and giving	1. Receiving:
	a. the provision of needed resources
	b. observation feedback
	c. quality training
	2. Giving
	a. Peers' support

The Mismatched Teachers' Experiences in Teaching Non-Related Subjects

The three major themes that emerged from the data analysis of the interviews included (a) believing in God; (b) unsolvable problems and problem solvers; and (c) receiving and giving. Each theme captured an essential component of the described experiences.

Theme 1: Believe in God

The theme of believing in God was the first theme identified through data analysis. As A participant shared her stories, a strong thread of belief in God was interwoven throughout the narratives. As Nana noted,

"My belief in God helps me to understand. They are my students. They are coming to me with needs. All the kids, no matter what their ability is. "I feel I fit in here so well. I can stand and speak here because of God. I believe that God is with all these beautiful things in nature. It's awesome can talk about God and His goodness, and that's just a part of this school and a part of me."

Furthermore, the theme of believing in God in God encompassed three sub-themes, including calling, gifting, and sending.

Called to Teach

The first sub-theme identified under belief in God was calling. Many participants described their teaching roles as a calling, with their faith providing a sense of purpose and strength to navigate the challenges of mismatched assignments. The path along which participants journeyed toward becoming mismatched teachers varied widely. Nana and Sari, for example, knew the school's decision that they became mismatched teachers and never wavered from that decision. Despite this, each participant expressed a sense of "calling," "mission," "feeling led," or "pulled" toward teaching. As confirmed by two participants (Nana and Sari),

"Yes, I'm just like God whispers to me, "You're good, I got you, don't worry." So, I say, "Okay." We started school, not school, but we started teaching stuff, right? So, I went in, and I just jumped in with both feet. I said, "This is where God wants me. I'm going to go, and let's do it." (Nana)

"There was an adjustment coming to this public school even though I have always known what God called me to do, and He called me to make a difference in the lives of all my children." (Sari)

On the other hand, a mismatched participant (Heni) conveyed that students spend their hours with teachers. She described the call to teach non-related subjects as a call to be the "primary discipler" of the students as a form of her care. She stated,

"When I came here, I gained a greater depth of understanding of how much God has called me to be the primary discipler of those students whose lives are entrusted into my hands. You know that this school trusted me to teach the subject, so the best treatment is I pray they are interested in the learning process and help them to understand what I teach."

Gifted to Teach

A second sub-theme under the belief in God emerged as giftedness. Participants found essential not only particular gifting that facilitated their effectiveness as mismatched teachers but also an affinity for teaching non-related subjects to their students. Two participants (Linda and Wilda) recalled her experience teaching non-related subjects as creativity to organize information and being "never satisfied" as gifts that helped her teach. They noticed,

"As a teacher, we should be creative. One of the biggest ways to engage is by being creative in some way, shape, or form. I think it would be fair to say as well that God has given me a gift for organizing information in a way that helps people

to grasp it. That's fine for me to teach non-related subjects. I try and always try to make my students understand what I say because I believe God will help me to help my students get the point." (Siska)

"I am never satisfied with what I do for my students. Even though the information that I gave to my students may not be accurate, it meant that I learned a lot about organizing the subject matter well and choosing different approaches to running my class." (Wilda)

Additionally, taking on a teaching role was a part of gifting for a participant, Linda. She saw this as a chance to learn through students. As a mismatched teacher, teaching non-related subjects challenged her to naturally move into a real teaching position. She conveyed,

"I love teaching, and I realize that I am good at it. I looked around at other teachers as they were teaching, and then I saw they should do this, they should try this with students. Then, I learned more about the gifts, I could share with the students and do this together with my students and just realize that I just transform everything as a teacher."

Based on the data, the source of motivation for the participants in this research was autonomous or intrinsic, in concert with the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000, 2008). Participants expressed a desire for growth, an interest and enjoyment in what they did, and a strong congruence with their values (Deci & Ryan, 2008) as they served in the current school setting. Of these, participants spoke most passionately about the fact that what they did and where they did it matched their value system, deeply held beliefs, belief in God, and calling. Interviews were upheld by triangulation with the interview data analysis. Each aligns closely with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Send to Teach

Four participants of this research discussed how their concept of missions illustrated something called "sent" to do on a different field within a school policy for teaching and learning. All the participants acknowledged a sense of mission or school policy in connection with their current assignment that was connected to their belief in God and calling from God. Within the overall context of believing in God, calling, gifting, and sending, two dimensions, the school policy, and freedom were identified to be most closely associated with the idea of sending.

The School Policy

The word "integrate" was used to illustrate the quality of education and school policy in the following description of what two participants (Yuli and Heni) experienced.

"I can't imagine separating God from school. I believe first and foremost that we are sent to a school that is privileged to teach and how God arranges it. We are allowing students an opportunity to learn and have a pretty good academic education." (Yuli)

"What the students need is to move forward, so my turn is to do my teaching as much as I can based on the school policy. And I feel that if I can instill some Godly principles, later in life, it will be easy for me to run this process." (Heni)

The idea of school policy placing mismatched teachers who teach non-related subjects was an indication of a dual role for participants in junior high school settings. They not only saw themselves as educators but also as disciplers in their belief in God. As claimed by Linda, she viewed the duality of roles as actually making her job easier rather than more challenging, she confirmed,

"Because I think if you are addressing your student needs, then the teaching is going to be easier. You know, because you are building that relationship with them. (Linda)"

Freedom

Ten participants in this research had taught in the public sector over periods ranging between 4-20 years. All these teachers expressed the

freedom to select teaching materials specifically for mismatched teachers in teaching non-related subjects in public schools. Most of the current public junior high schools at the sites of this research did not provide teaching materials such as textbooks as the main sources in teaching subjects such as Arts or Environmental Education. Mismatched teachers have the freedom to select or create teaching materials based on their interests. Relating to this, a participant (Virda) expressed,

"I felt like I was making a big difference in teaching non-related subjects. I have the freedom to choose the topic that I teach based on the outlines listed in the curriculum applied in the school, somehow, I need help from other teachers to share their experiences relating to subject matters." (Virda)

In summary, the theme of believing in God was first identified from the data and integrally interwoven with the ideas of calling, gifting, sending school policy, and freedom to incorporate a belief in God into the participants' daily mission field. Believing in God remained an integral part and inseparable from the other themes discussed below. These findings align with the work of Miller and McGowan (2019), who found that spiritual beliefs can enhance resilience among educators, providing them with a framework to cope with stress and adversity. Similarly, a study by Hodge et al. (2015) highlighted that teachers who view their work as a vocation often exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment, which can mitigate the negative effects of challenging work environments.

Theme 2: Unsolvable Problems, Problem Solvers

The second main theme revealed by the analysis of the data was the theme of dealing with the unsolvable while solving the solvable. It reflects the systemic challenges faced by mismatched teachers, including inadequate administrative support, insufficient teaching materials, and recruitment policies that do not align teachers' expertise with their assigned subjects.

Unsolvable Problems

Participants in this research understood that mismatched teachers as the first-hand affected their students' achievement during their teaching time in the current schools that they served. At the current school, Linda and other mismatched teachers were unable to teach for periods due to their mismatched educational background with the subject material that they taught. As responded by a mismatched teacher (Heni),

"I felt down at that time. At first, I considered that it was quite hard for me to teach mismatched subjects with my educational background. I was confused with the subject materials. I wanted to give up, but I remembered that this was my duty, so I needed to be professional."

While the condition at that time seemed unsolvable, participants recounted many seemingly unsolvable challenges within the school, primarily administrators and the school policies during their teaching time. Among the challenges described were mismatched teachers felt disappointed in poorly run or disorganized administrative functions, exhaustive demands on teacher time over, inconsistently applied or inadequate policies, miscommunication, frequent loss of planning period, lack of administrative support regarding the textbooks provided by the schools and failure by the administration to ask for mismatched teacher input when making decisions impacting the classroom. In this case, a major concern was expressed over an area of decisions impacting the classroom as conveyed by Siska as follows,

"Often, I talked about many things to administrators; we need to provide such main guidelines like the main textbooks to teach subject materials. Also, I think decisions are made for us as primary disciplers, we are their teachers since we have our student's half of the day. Decisions

need to address for us, mismatched teachers. We should get the input as educators because not all people know how our students work, and they don't know how our schedule works even though they give us a schedule and say, "This is the time you have lunch." But life doesn't work under that schedule in the classroom." (Siska)

The second major concern expressed was the school policy relating to teacher recruitment. Three participants in the research interview considered it to be a serious problem. The following excerpt is from one of the interviews in which much discussion on these issues took place.

"I think an admission test when the school hires a teacher is needed, and I think the school policy should be revised. The school needs to set the requirements to hire the new teacher in line with the educational background. For example, when the school needs an English teacher, the school should hire a teacher with English educational background. I meant a teacher who graduated from the English department." (Yuli)

"As in my experience, I never saw an admission test for the new teachers, at least they should have teaching training before they are accepted to be the new teachers." (Virda)

"For hiring new teachers, especially for honored teachers, there is only about the need for teachers, sometimes they have different educational backgrounds that differ from the subjects that they teach. Of course, it will affect the student's achievement in the end." (Gusti)

These issues weighed on the participants as significant parts of seemingly unsolvable but severely draining questions. However, it was the next theme, solving the solvable, in which participants primarily focused their considerable energies.

Problem Solvers

Problem solvers were indicated as a theme of participants in data analysis. Mismatched

teachers had remarkable successes in areas including learning to trust, classroom discipline, relationship building, classroom discipline, and engaging students in learning.

Solving the Problem of Classroom Discipline

Even though the literature is replete with studies linking teacher attrition to discipline and behavior issues in the classroom (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012; Schaefer et al., 2012), half of the participants did not consider classroom management to be a serious challenge. As they described in the comments below, they considered the respect given by students to be attributable to their primary focus on building genuinely caring student-teacher relationships. She commented,

"Even though I am a mismatched teacher, my students know when I care, and I am trying to help. I am good at teaching my students. I am trying to make an impact. When they face some difficulties with the subject materials, I try to relate them to real examples. For instance, I bring by myself a musical instrument to show them and teach them how to operate this instrument, the next day, I ask them to bring their instruments to be practiced together in the classroom." (Sari)

Nana additionally remarked on respect as well. "You can't command respect from your students, it's something you must earn. I believe because they see me every day, they see me inside out. I think that when I teach them, they respect my class." (Nana)

Trust was an important aspect of the relationship for Heni. She noted, "If I don't develop a relationship with my students, I am not going to be able to reach their hearts. And I believe that's what God's called us to do, is to reach the hearts of students. That is what we call 'trust'. On the other hand, if the students have not developed a level of trust in a relationship with me, they won't trust me to come to them whatever the situation may be. I will always keep in touch

with them to find me whenever they need me." (Heni)

On the other hand, disciplining appropriately was a key to relationship for Gusti, He commented, "How I built with mismatched teachers and parents made me responsible for my actions. A beating doesn't always make my students responsible for their actions, but if I figure out when there are problems with my students, and I ask, "Why are you lying?", then they respond "Because I feel like if I tell you the truth, you're not going to love me. So, I think it's like that relationship-building time." (Gusti)

In addition to these descriptions of relationship building as impacting classroom management, balance in creating an environment conducive to learning was significant. Putri described this element in his classroom. He said,

"I have made a great effort to build a good environment in my class. I try to balance all the things. I must work; I should have leisure and play. If I go too far too extreme, I don't get the balance that I need. I think it's the same way in developing, establishing, and maintaining ongoing relationships with my students. Set the boundary and let them know there are places and lines that they cannot cross, and I do not allow them to cross." (Putri)

Solving the Problem of Engaging Students in Learning

Based on the data, while all the participants discussed some degree of success in engaging students in learning, eight of ten teachers described a high level of student engagement consistently. In describing student engagement in the excerpts below, the participants demonstrated their individuality while incorporating elements of fun, creativity, curiosity, enjoyment, love of content, and inspiration. Three mismatched teachers conveyed as follows,

"We must be adults when we teach them, but when we are working young learners, we must let them come out. And I try to do that. I try to

have fun because I know I learn a lot when I have fun. So, my students do the same. They are learning as they are having fun. They are having fun; they don't know they are learning. That's the point." (Siska)

Nana loved it when her students were so engaged, they did not even think about learning. She noticed, "The moment when you realize you have everyone's attention, they are engaged, they are having fun, and they are learning. They are not even thinking about the fact that they are learning. I love it when I can see that. They are just engaged curious and exploring. So that's fun."

Creativity and engagement were connected for Wilda. She declared, "I would say creativity because that is one of the biggest ways to engage by being creative in some way to run the class." (Wilda)

Passion for a subject, Environmental education, a mismatched teacher revealed, "I love what I do. I love planting and I just hope that some of my love of it will flow through into my students. So, many of them come with such a hate of planting and it's like, "This is so much fun!". But once they learn how to do that, then they directly practice, they say "Oh, that's so easy!", and I respond, "Yeah, that's not what you said when I had you before."

Heni utilized the natural curiosity of teens in engagement. She expressed, "I like teens at that age when they are young, they are so enthusiastic about learning, and they are so interested in everything. They have lots of curiosity and they are so funny."

These sub-themes resonate with the findings of Ingersoll (2001), who noted that misalignment between teacher qualifications and teaching assignments can lead to decreased effectiveness and job dissatisfaction. Furthermore, research by Darling-Hammond (2010) emphasizes the importance of adequate support and resources in fostering effective teaching practices, suggesting that systemic changes are necessary to address these challenges.

Theme 3: Receiving and Giving

Receiving and giving support was the fourth theme revealed through the data analysis process. Participants in this research described their experiences in public junior high school settings primarily in terms of their relationships with God and with their students. However, their ability to receive support from their peers, administrators, and others, as well as their generosity in giving support, was an evident thread running through the data.

Receiving

Although challenges with administrators and administrative policies were noted as part of the "unsolvable problems" theme above, participants were quick to point out how they received administrative support. Teachers noted the provision of needed resources, observation feedback, and quality training for mismatched teachers.

Mismatch teachers appreciated administrators who were present and knowledgeable about individual students. Caring about the participants as people beyond their teacher roles and daily communication with peers also made teachers feel supported. Participants noted the support demonstrated by the administration for the teachers as evidenced by the absence of micromanagement in terms of providing textbooks for mismatched teachers in teaching non-related subjects. Putri and Nana uttered,

"The most important thing that the administrators don't fully do is try to micromanage us in terms of providing the textbooks, and we need them to guide our teaching process. They put a lot of belief in God in us; we have a lot of freedom to do what we want to do." (Putri)

"The school administrator threw me out there to sink or swim, but at the same time, they believe in God in my ability to do the right thing to figure out what should be done, and they are always very supportive of basically whatever we do. If there is something that my students don't understand what's going on, they would be quick to ask for an explanation, and I don't know that that's happened, but it's always constructive for both, me and my students to gain much information about the problems." (Nana)

Participants also received abundant support from family members, friends, and peers to maintain their motivation and accomplish their goals. Wilda explained positive interactions with supportive colleagues. She clarified,

"Here, nobody is going to be bad mouth you behind your back. I mean, if you are hurting, somebody is going to be out there to lay a hand on you, say a prayer for you, and always with you to come up to you and ask you, "Are you okay today?". I mean, it's just amazing to work with people all the time, and I have been so fortunate practically all my life." (Wilda)

Linda also found support from her peers. She claimed, "We help each other to do things well, and we each have different giftings. So, we work together because we need each other. I need peers to chill me out, and they need me to organize them. We learn from each other's gifts so that we can help each other to do better." (Linda)

One of the participants, Sari, a Christian teacher, specifically noted receiving support through their relationship with God. She noted that her support was "in the Word of God." She concurred,

"I have a lot of people's support, I have a lot of family support, but God is kind of the one solid thing. Issues come up in the church and issues come up with friends and we have problems because we are human. God is the one who is always stable, who's always there." (Sari)

Nana also found God to be her support. She revealed, "I can infer God supports me. Because He's always like, "Okay, today you could have done better than before." God supports me especially when I feel blank relating

to subject materials. I'm able to lay in His presence and just recover." (Nana)

In this case, spiritual experiences can significantly enhance the mental well-being of mismatched teachers by providing coping mechanisms for stress. Research indicates that spiritual practices and beliefs contribute to better stress management, lower burnout rates, and improved overall mental health among educators (Miller, 2003; Baker, 2008; Roffey, 2012).

Giving

Participants in this research expressed gratitude for the support received from others in helping them stay motivated and reach their goals in teaching non-related subjects. However, participants seemed more eager to seek out ways in which they could give support to others. Six of the participants described their efforts to especially support new teachers. As Gusti noted, it was important to offer someone new what had been lacking in their first year as mismatched teachers. He remarked,

"When the new mismatched teacher came, I took myself to make myself available for them for anything he needed and I said, and I tried you to know, we were side-by-side, and I was there to help them as I could." (Gusti)

Putri also committed to helping mismatched teachers avoid difficulties they had faced. She commented, "As a mismatched teacher in the school, I was so overwhelmed. I was overwhelmed. I'm going to be at their side (mismatch teachers) and walk them through the dynamics. Because I was so overwhelmed, I wouldn't want that to be overwhelming. Until they can learn it, I'm going to be right there with them." (Putri)

The final theme, Receiving and Giving, underscores the importance of support systems in the professional lives of mismatched teachers. Participants reported that engagement from peers, administrators, and their personal faith

helped them overcome challenges. Moreover, many teachers actively contributed to mentoring new educators and fostering positive learning environments. This reciprocal relationship aligns with the findings of Wang and Odell (2002), who highlighted the significance of mentorship in enhancing teacher efficacy and retention. Additionally, research by Johnson and Birkeland (2003) indicates that supportive professional relationships can mitigate feelings of isolation and enhance job satisfaction among teachers.

Assigning teachers to teach outside their expertise raises ethical challenges, including inadequate subject knowledge, potential harm to student learning, and teacher stress. Solutions involve providing professional development, mentorship, and collaborative teaching models to support teachers in these roles (Levison & Fay, 2023; SCIRP, 2023).

Additionally, the research on mismatched teachers in Indonesia has significant implications for education policy both regionally and internationally. It highlights the need for policies that ensure teacher assignments align with their qualifications, which can enhance educational quality and equity.In other regions of Indonesia, particularly in underserved areas, this research can inform targeted recruitment and professional development strategies to address teacher shortages and improve retention. Internationally, the findings may resonate with countries facing similar challenges in teacher allocation and training, prompting a reevaluation of teacher preparation programs and assignment practices to foster better educational outcomes globally.

■ CONCLUSION

This research explored the experiences of mismatched teachers in public junior high schools, revealing three major themes; believed in god, unsolvable problems, and receiving and giving. These themes reflect the personal, professional, institutional challenges faced by teachers assigned

to non-related subjects and the ways they navigate their roles. First, believe in God emerged as a crucial factor influencing teachers' motivation and resilience. Many teachers perceived their roles as a calling, relying on faith to persevere through difficulties. Their belief provided them with a sense of purpose and the strength to adapt to new teaching responsibilities. Second, unsolvable problems and problem solvers highlighted the systemic challenges faced by mismatched teachers, including inadequate administrative support, lack of proper teaching materials, and recruitment policies that do not align teachers' expertise with their assigned subjects. Despite these issues, many teachers developed problem-solving strategies to manage their classroom effectively, engage students, maintain discipline. Third, the theme of receiving and giving emphasized the importance of support systems. Teachers found engagement from peers, administrators, and personal faith, which helped them overcome professional challenges. At the same time, they actively contributed to mentoring new teachers and creating positive learning environments.

Based on the findings of recent studies on mismatched teachers in Indonesia, schools and local governments can take several concrete steps to enhance the effectiveness of these teachers and improve educational outcomes. Here are some key initiatives to provide; special training programs for mismatched teachers, inclusive curriculum development, mentorship and peer support programs to seek assistance from experienced teachers, community engagement initiatives, and policy and administrative support to provide financial incentives or career development points for teachers who complete specialized cultural competency programs.

However, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted with a limited number of participants, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. A larger and more diverse sample could offer a broader perspective and enhance the reliability of the conclusions. Second, the study was conducted within a specific local context, which may not be directly applicable to other regions with different social, economic, or cultural conditions. Future research should consider cross-regional comparisons to strengthen the applicability of the findings.

These limitations suggest the need for further studies that expand the sample size and explore the topic in various geographical and demographic settings. Additionally, employing mixed-method approaches or longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the dynamics observed in this research. Addressing these gaps will help refine the conclusions and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of mismatched teachers.

Disclosure Statement

The researchers declare no conflict of interest in the design of the research; in the collection, analysis, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

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