



Professional Satisfaction and Occupational Challenges

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Abstract

Review Article

Professional satisfaction and occupational challenges of Child Development Workers (CDWs) in Cordon, Isabela, during the School Year 2025–2026. It aimed to determine the respondents' demographic profile and assess their level of professional satisfaction in terms of intrinsic motivation, particularly job enjoyment, sense of relatedness, competence, and autonomy. It also identified the occupational challenges they encountered, including limited resources, heavy workload, and behavioral or social concerns among learners. Furthermore, the study investigated whether significant differences existed in professional satisfaction and occupational challenges when CDWs were grouped according to age, gender, years of experience, employment status, and educational attainment. A descriptive-comparative quantitative research design was employed involving thirty-eight CDWs from twenty-six barangays in Cordon, Isabela. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, standard deviations, t-tests, and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Findings showed that most CDWs were female, aged 24–62, with more than seven years of experience and holding a Bachelor's Degree in Education. Professional satisfaction was high, while occupational challenges were moderate due to limited resources, workload, and behavioral issues.

Keywords: Professional Satisfaction, Challenges, Learning Competencies, Demographic Profile, Child Development Workers.

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Introduction

Early childhood education personnel play a crucial role in ensuring the holistic development of young children. Globally, research consistently shows that early childhood workers face multiple work-related challenges such as limited instructional resources, heavy workloads, insufficient professional support, and low compensation. These conditions significantly influence their professional satisfaction, motivation, and work performance

(UNICEF, 2019; OECD, 2020). Job satisfaction among early childhood educators has been strongly linked to workforce stability, teacher commitment, and the quality of care and learning experiences provided to children (OECD, 2020).

In the Philippine context, the government has demonstrated its commitment to strengthening early childhood education through the implementation of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) system. This system was institutionalized through



Republic Act No. 10410, otherwise known as the Early Years Act of 2013, which mandates the provision of comprehensive, integrated, and sustainable ECCD programs and services for children from birth to four years old. In addition, Republic Act No. 11650 (2022), or the Inclusive Education Act, reinforces the government's commitment to inclusive and equitable access to early childhood education, particularly for children with special needs. The continued strengthening of the ECCD system has been supported through executive issuances, joint memoranda, and inter-agency guidelines aimed at improving governance, coordination, and service delivery at the local government level.

Despite these policy initiatives, several systemic concerns remain evident. National reports indicate low enrollment rates among children aged three to four, a shortage of child development centers, and child-to-worker ratios that exceed ECCD standards. Moreover, the absence of a standardized salary structure and the variability of employment conditions across local government units continue to affect the welfare, motivation, and professional satisfaction of Child Development Workers (Philstar.com, 2024; PIDS, 2024).

While national-level data provide a general overview of early childhood education challenges, there is limited localized empirical evidence that captures how Child Development Workers experience professional satisfaction and occupational challenges in rural municipalities. Most existing studies focus on urban or regional settings where access to resources, training, and institutional support is relatively stronger. In contrast, CDWs assigned to rural and semi-rural municipalities such as Cordon, Isabela, may encounter unique contextual challenges, including constrained local budgets, limited access to professional development opportunities, inconsistent supervision, and shortages of instructional materials.

Despite the presence of several Child Development Centers in Cordon, Isabela, no systematic quantitative study has been conducted to examine the professional satisfaction and occupational challenges of Child Development

Workers in the municipality. This lack of locality-based evidence creates a gap between national policy intentions and actual working conditions at the grassroots level.

Thus, there is a clear need for a quantitative, context-specific study that examines both the professional satisfaction and occupational challenges of Child Development Workers in Cordon, Isabela. Generating empirical data on their experiences may assist local government units, ECCD coordinators, and policymakers in developing responsive support systems, improving working conditions, and strengthening early childhood education services, particularly in rural communities.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive-comparative research design to determine the level of professional satisfaction and the occupational challenges experienced by Child Development Workers (CDWs) in Cordon, Isabela, and to examine whether significant differences exist when respondents are grouped according to selected profile variables such as age, gender, years of experience, employment status, and educational attainment. The respondents consisted of all thirty-eight (38) Child Development Workers assigned in Day Care Centers across the twenty-six (26) barangays of Cordon, Isabela. Due to the small population, a census sampling approach was used, allowing the inclusion of the entire population of CDWs in the municipality.

Data were collected using a researcher-made survey questionnaire with three parts: respondents' profile, professional satisfaction, and occupational challenges. A four-point Likert scale was used to measure the level of professional satisfaction and the extent of occupational challenges experienced by the respondents. Before data collection, permission was secured from the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO) of Cordon, Isabela. The questionnaires were personally distributed and retrieved by the researcher, checked for completeness, and encoded for analysis.

The data were analyzed using frequency count and percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation. To test for significant differences, independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were employed, followed by Tukey’s HSD for post hoc analysis when necessary. All tests were conducted at the 0.05 level of significance, with the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance tested using the Shapiro–Wilk and Levene’s tests. Ethical standards were strictly observed by ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and secure handling of all collected data.

Results and Discussions

The Results and Discussion section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the respondents. The findings focus on mean results and tests of significant differences to determine the level of professional satisfaction and occupational challenges experienced by the respondents, as well as variations when grouped by selected profile variables. The results are discussed to highlight the patterns and implications of the findings in relation to the study's objectives.

Table 1. Mean and Test of Difference on the Professional Satisfaction and Occupational Challenges of CDC Workers when grouped according to profile

Challenges	Mean	Age	Sex	Years of Experience in CDC	Employment Status	Educational Attainment
A. Professional Satisfaction						
1. Enjoyment and Passion	3.44 (SA)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
2. Sense of Relatedness	3.39 (SA)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
3. Sense of Competence	3.45 (SA)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
4. Sense of Autonomy	3.26 (SA)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
B. Occupational Challenges						
1. Resources and Facilities	2.61 (O)	sig	ns	ns	sig	Ns
2. Workload and Compensation	2.88 (O)	ns	ns	ns	sig	Ns
3. Behavioral and Social Challenges	2.75 (O)	sig	ns	ns	sig	Ns

The findings revealed that Child Development Workers (CDW) demonstrated a high level of professional satisfaction, as indicated by the

dimensions of enjoyment and passion (M = 3.44), sense of relatedness (M = 3.39), sense of competence (M = 3.45), and sense of autonomy (M = 3.26), all

interpreted as Strongly Agree (SA). Statistical analysis showed no significant differences in these dimensions when respondents were grouped according to age, sex, years of experience in the Child Development Center (CDC), employment status, and educational attainment.

Regarding occupational challenges, respondents often experienced concerns related to resources and facilities ($M = 2.61$), workload and compensation ($M = 2.88$), and behavioral and social challenges ($M = 2.75$). Significant differences were observed in resources and facilities, and behavioral and social challenges when grouped according to age and employment status. Similarly, workload and compensation showed a significant difference based on employment status. However, no significant differences were found when the respondents were grouped according to sex, years of experience, and educational attainment.

The results indicate that Child Development Workers generally maintain a high level of professional satisfaction, suggesting that intrinsic factors such as passion for teaching, positive relationships with learners, and a strong sense of competence and autonomy contribute to their commitment in early childhood education. The absence of significant differences across demographic variables implies that these positive professional attitudes are consistently shared among Child Development Workers regardless of their personal and professional backgrounds.

However, the presence of occupational challenges related to resources, facilities, workload, and behavioral issues suggests that workplace conditions still pose difficulties that may affect the delivery of quality early childhood education. The significant differences observed in some of these challenges based on age and employment status imply that workers in different employment conditions or life stages may experience varying levels of difficulty in managing available resources, classroom behaviors, and workload demands.

These findings imply that while Child Development Workers possess strong intrinsic motivation and professional satisfaction, there is a

need for institutional and administrative support to address workplace challenges. Local government units and program administrators may consider strengthening resource allocation, improving facilities, and providing adequate instructional materials in Child Development Centers. In addition, policies that address fair workload distribution and improved compensation or employment conditions may help reduce occupational challenges. Providing professional development programs on classroom management and behavioral strategies may also assist workers in effectively handling behavioral and social concerns among young learners. Overall, improving these support systems can enhance both the well-being of Child Development Workers and the quality of early childhood education services.

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Child Development Workers in Cordon, Isabela maintain a high level of professional satisfaction despite experiencing moderate occupational challenges. The respondents are mostly young to middle-aged female educators who possess relevant academic qualifications and considerable teaching experience, although many are employed on a contractual basis. Their strong sense of competence, enjoyment in teaching, positive relationships, and perceived autonomy contribute to their high level of satisfaction. While challenges related to workload, compensation, behavioral concerns, and limited resources are evident, these difficulties do not significantly diminish their professional commitment. The results indicate that intrinsic motivation and dedication to early childhood education serve as important factors that sustain their engagement and effectiveness in their work. Nevertheless, strengthening institutional support systems, improving compensation, and providing adequate instructional resources are essential to enhance the working conditions and long-term professional well-being of Child Development Workers.

Integrating the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the working conditions and professional well-being of Child Development Workers in Cordon, Isabela. Policy makers and Early Childhood Care and

Development Council administrators are encouraged to increase financial support for classroom resources and review the compensation and benefits of CDWs to better match their responsibilities and workload. Continuous professional development programs focusing on classroom management, inclusive education, and behavioral strategies should also be strengthened, particularly for less experienced workers. CDWs are encouraged to participate in peer mentoring and collaborative support systems to share effective practices and cope with occupational challenges. They should also pursue continuous learning through trainings, seminars, and online courses while maintaining a balanced work–life routine to reduce fatigue and sustain motivation. Administrators may further promote supportive environments that recognize the contributions of CDWs and encourage professional growth. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct longitudinal studies to explore trends in professional satisfaction and occupational challenges over time. Additional investigations may also examine the influence of administrative support, parental involvement, and community participation on the job satisfaction of Child Development Workers. Exploring the development of wellness programs specifically designed for CDWs may also help improve their personal and professional well-being. Implementing these recommendations may contribute to strengthening the performance, satisfaction, and long-term effectiveness of Child Development Workers in delivering quality early childhood education services.

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