

THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF MICRO AND MACRO CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ON THE TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE INDONESIAN RURAL AREA

Gregoriana Nobilio Pasia Janu¹, Concilianus Laos Mbato²

Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia

¹ gracenobilio@gmail.com, ² cons@usd.ac.id

Abstract

The primary goal of this paper is to understand the extent to which the significance of macro and micro contextual factors influence rural teachers' professional identity development in Manggarai, NTT. Qualitative methods were employed, involving four rural teachers who shared their perspectives through an open-ended online questionnaire. The findings revealed a positive attitude towards factors such as effective communication with students and colleagues, recognition, and access to training opportunities for professional support. Unstructured interviews were conducted to delve deeper into how these factors influenced the teachers' professional identity construction and development in practice. The results indicated that, apart from the national examination due to educational reforms, the macro-contextual factors played a supportive role in the cognitive dimension, emphasizing the teachers' desire for professional growth. Despite expressing dissatisfaction with administrative demands and supervision, the participants valued the positive experiences derived from both factors. The study's focus on both micro and macro contextual factors may limit the depth of understanding regarding their specific impacts on professional identity, requiring future research to explore individual factors in greater detail. Additionally, the use of senior teachers in rural areas as participants may restrict generalizability, suggesting the need for diverse participants to capture variations in perceptions and practices across different settings.

Keywords: Micro and Macro Contextual Factors; Rural Teachers; Teacher Identity

INTRODUCTION

Looking from the perspective of the sociocultural lens enables teachers' professional identity to be constructed through direct social exposure. Pennington and Richards (2016) argued that identity is not a fixed or predetermined characteristic of an individual, but rather shaped by the social context in which a person exists. This social context includes personal values and external factors such as contextual requirements and social norms. Moreover, this process can happen at micro and macro levels (e.g., Hong, et al., 2018). Macro-level influences come from national educational policies set by the government, while micro-level influences occur within the school context, such as relationships with students, colleagues, school authorities, and parents. The contextual factors are approached at micro and macro levels where teachers' internal and external drives contribute to constructing their identities. As Day (2018) mentioned, teacher identity can be politicized and transformative due to the competing demands that affect how teachers act, navigate and negotiate their sense of self. Internal (emotional-cognitive) and external (family/social/institution) feedback contribute to changes in teachers' view of themselves as educators. Previous studies on teachers' identity formation highlighted influential contextual factors, including institutional constraints, external social factors (Wang, 2020); challenges, and emotions in teaching (Mulu et al., 2022). Factors such as cognitive competence,

salary income (Barahona & Ibaceta-Quijanes, 2020), school's contextual (Rubie-Davies et al., 2012 & Butler, 2021 on teachers' beliefs; Isotalo, 2017), the need for professional training (Harun, 2019), and teachers' emotional vulnerability (Lasky, 2005) also play essential roles. As a result, teachers tend to develop and reinforce behaviors consistent with their social context's expectations.

The influence of community on teacher identity development highlights the importance of demographic factors in supporting teachers. In a study conducted by Pravita and Kuswando (2021), students and colleagues were identified as the two main factors that have the most impact on the professional identity transformation of novice teachers through the support of Community of Practice (CoP). Another study has also discovered the gap between teachers' personal and professional identities, which was affected by classroom settings and social context (Sinom & Kuswando, 2022). Most previous studies on teachers' identity formation were conducted in non-rural areas and may not fully capture the unique contextual factors influencing rural teachers. This gap in understanding specific rural contextual factors prompted the study by Salinas (2017), which identified micro and macro factors affecting EFL Chilean teachers' professional identity development. This finding is crucial for further exploration in the context of Indonesian teachers' identity development, especially in rural areas. The present research focuses on the professional identity development of rural teachers in Manggarai, Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), one of Indonesia's rural regions, which ranks low in educational indicators according to a previous Ministry of Education and Culture report (Florida & Mbato, 2020).

Several factors have contributed to the situation in rural areas. Inadequate infrastructure and connectivity, unequal education funding, poverty, underdevelopment issues, and inadequate teacher salaries are some of the key challenges, as explained by Benny Harman, an Indonesian parliament member from NTT. Furthermore, the impact of low income on teachers' performance and identity development is particularly significant in rural areas, where many teachers still receive honorary salaries (Florida & Mbato, 2020). These factors present distinct challenges to the professional growth and identity formation of rural teachers, necessitating further research to understand and address their specific needs in the context of Manggarai, Nusa Tenggara Timur, and other similar rural regions in Indonesia. The primary focus of this study, therefore, is to examine the extent to which the micro and macro-contextual factors contribute to the professional identity development of rural teachers in Manggarai.

Identity is a dynamic term, depending on the different contexts the teachers are in, as Day (2018) mentioned that "...teacher's professional identity is inherently unstable, subject to fluctuation" (p. 61). Therefore, teachers are required to be able to cope with adoption and adaptation of professional identities development processes (Day et al., 2006), meaning to say that teachers should be able to embrace and take on new aspects of their professional identity while also being flexible and adjusting to changes and developments in their roles and responsibilities as educators. This adaptability is essential for their growth and effectiveness in their teaching careers. In a professional context, a teacher's professional role is defined as a functional role where teachers demonstrate their duties and functions as required (Britzman, 1992). She further implied that teachers' identity as a 'self' is a process of "being" a teacher that emphasizes commitments that result from direct exposure to two major components, social and cultural. Thus, it can be interpreted that teacher identity is different from performing duties. Rather, it is self-construction and negotiation through human relationships within social and cultural learning contexts. Comparably, Varghese et al. (2005) agreed that the formation, negotiation, and growth of teacher identity is primarily a social process in institutional settings. The following figure portrays a model of the basic elements of constructing teachers' identities resulting from a study conducted by Soren (2013) on teacher identity at the University of Copenhagen.

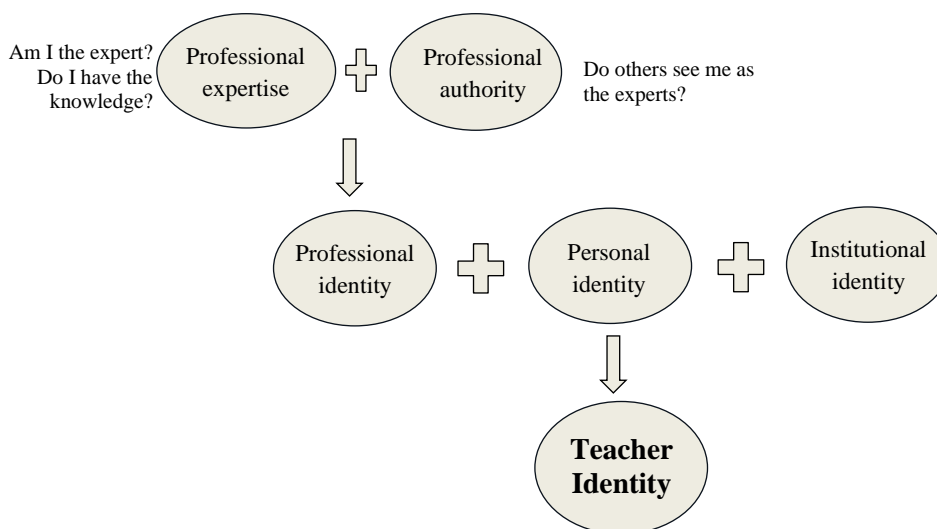


Figure 1. Components of Teacher Identity adopted from Soren (2013)

The interconnection between the elements proposes how teacher identity can be constructed. Professional identity is formed from a combination of professional expertise which refers to teachers’ pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge, and professional authority that requires acknowledgment of these competencies by members of the community where the teachers live and work (Soren, 2013). Personal identity underlines unique personal traits that define who they are as teachers, and the last element is the institutional identity which refers to the academic community’s hierarchical position. Hence, teacher identity carries multiple definitions that are flexible yet fixed at the same time depending on the context and the environment they fit into.

Various contextual factors contribute to teachers’ identity development and they engage both teachers and other educational players to collaborate. Avalos (2011) implicated that teachers can have problems with their working environment and lower their confidence if they do not understand the demands for identity changes and reforms. Menter (2010) pointed out political and social changes as *macro contextual factors* to teacher identity, directly connected to policy, politics, and administration concerns. At the *micro level*, teacher identity is challenged by emotional and cognitive perspectives (Day, 2002). It is to underline teachers’ agency and self-confidence in dealing with their intra- and interpersonal skills with students and colleagues and their sensibility towards their working environment.

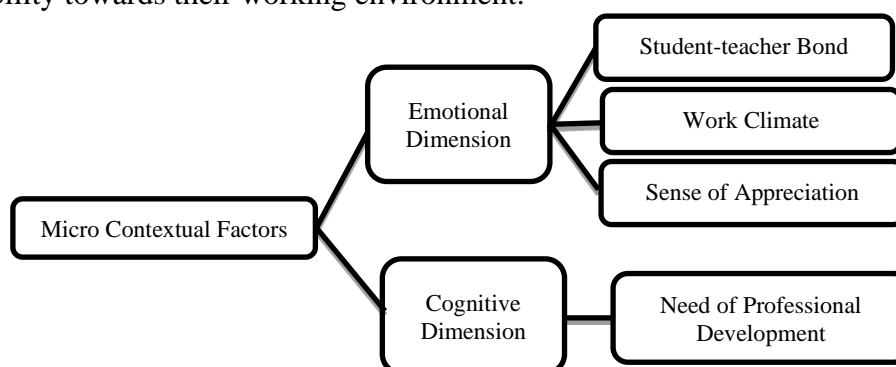


Figure 2. Micro contextual factors

adopted from Salinas (2017)

Micro contextual factors, as a result of educational changes, serve the correlation between teacher identity and emotion and the cognitive dimensions (Day, 2002). Emotional dimensions are always engaged in working life in which teachers need control over everything they encounter. Day (2018) stated that it is including their communication and relationship with their students and colleagues that require an understanding of their own and others' feelings. Not only do the interactions affect the emotion, but the sentiments from expectations and demands provoke teachers to manage their emotional regulation as a key to teachers' professional identity (p. 64). Similarly, Zembylas (2003) and Heidemann et al. (2016) pointed out that teachers might be resistant to identity change as their confidence might be compromised, which could result in feelings of insecurity, vulnerability, or even incompetence. Therefore, any form of appreciation can help and even prevent teachers from being disconnected from their formed identity, as it also determines teachers' professional authority. As for the cognitive dimension, the main factors affecting teachers' identity are the importance of professional growth and their sense to commit to and disconnect from their work settings and academic demands (Barahona & Ibaceta-Quijanes, 2020).

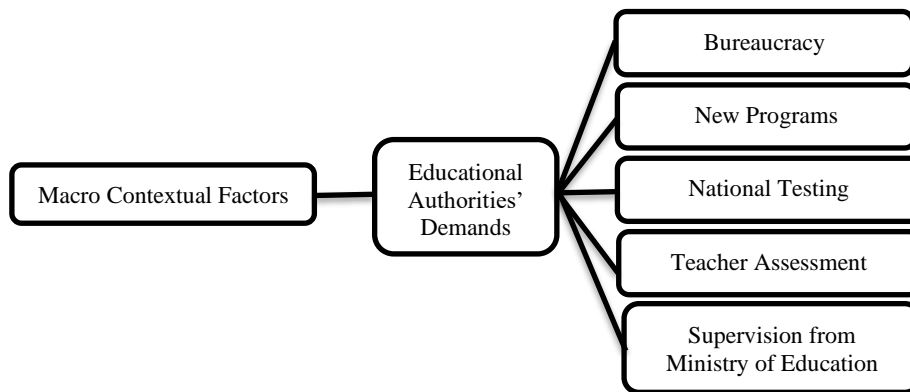


Figure 3. Macro contextual factors adopted from Salinas (2017)

While the micro context deals with emotion and cognitive matters, the macro level covers the educational policy made by the authorities. As members of a wide range of communities, teachers must cope with any regulations, forces, demands, or expectations given to them to carry out their duties and responsibilities in the name of “a teacher”. Flores and Day (2006) outlined that apart from teachers' personal life histories and educational backgrounds, school culture and management contribute to constructing and maintaining teachers' identities. On top of everything, Salinas (2017) mentioned that teachers' identity is hard to develop because of the workload, especially the administrative tasks they must cooperate with. In this case, the tasks can result from government or school policies and programs, which can cover management responsibilities if one holds an important position in the organization, teacher assessment and development program, supervision, or school accreditation. Xie and Dong (2020) cited Zhang and Lam (2008) that mentioned another factor in the identity crisis: teachers' failures toward the curriculum reform adaptation. Additionally, according to Salinas (2017), national testing is considered to be one of the macro factors. Nonetheless, in the Indonesian reform educational context, national testing is no longer applicable since currently Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture officially declared the absence of national testing due to Covid-19 through a letter in 2020 (Ramadani et al., 2021, p.141).

METHOD

As mentioned by Sloan (2006), teachers construct their identities by recognizing their self-perception and the perceptions of others through their teaching experiences. This study focused on acknowledging perceptions and making meaning of experiences. A qualitative research design was employed, incorporating two data collection methods: an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. As highlighted by Hamilton and Finley (2019), qualitative research allows for a deeper understanding of the "hows" and "whys" of phenomena. Studies like Lessard et al. (2016) have used qualitative methods to explain practical change, while others, such as Aarons et al. (2016), have employed qualitative approaches to uncover contextual elements and provider perspectives that impact implementation and sustainability. By utilizing qualitative methods, researchers can delve into the complex dynamics of implementation, shedding light on the underlying factors and processes that drive or hinder successful implementation efforts.

This study collected data from four rural teachers in Manggarai-NTT. Twelve open-ended questionnaire questions, formulated based on the coding result of a study on contextual factors done by Salinas (2017), were distributed to acknowledge their perception of the micro-macro contextual factors. An in-depth, unstructured interview was done to explore their narratives of professional identity development about these contextual factors. The researchers contacted the four senior rural teachers online, who were selected based on their extensive teaching experience, and asked for their consent to participate in the study. The researchers chose online communication to address distance issues. Both questionnaire data and interview recordings were presented in narrative forms to ensure that participants' voices and perspectives were accurately represented in the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section delves into the responses to the primary research question: "To what extent do micro and macro contextual factors influence rural teachers' professional identity development in Manggarai?" The research found that these teachers recognized the importance of authentic educational experiences, collaboration with stakeholders, and fulfilling teaching responsibilities, including administrative tasks. The findings of this study highlighted two key dimensions: the emotional dimension, including teacher-student relationships, appreciation, and the working climate, and the cognitive dimension, which emphasized the need for professional development. Moreover, the findings suggested that macro-contextual factors, such as demands from authorities, played a supportive role in shaping teachers' professional identities, particularly concerning the need for professional development (cognitive dimension). The overview of the result was presented in the table below.

Table 1. Teachers' Perception of Micro and Macro Contextual Factors

Contextual Factors		Responses
Micro	Emotional Dimension	Student-teacher bond
		Work climate
		Sense of Appreciation

	Cognitive Dimension	Need of Professional Development	Highly needed in terms of upgraded pedagogical skills
		Bureaucracy	More as formalities rather than meaningful contributions to professional development
		New Programs	highly valued despite minimum participation
Macro	Educational Authorities' Demands	National Testing	Not relevant anymore
		Teacher Assessment	beneficial in terms of professional development, feedback, and reflection.
		Supervision from Ministry of Education	Feedback given could either motivate or hinder teachers' performances.

These findings were further reinforced by the teachers' perspectives on each factor, adding depth to the discussion.

Discussion

Micro Contextual Factors in Rural Context

As has been highlighted by Salinas (2017), the micro-contextual factors happen in interactions with students, support from the working environment, and the need for professional development. In the context of rural areas, these four aspects play significant roles in shaping and developing teachers' professional identities. The concept of micro-contextual factors encompasses two significant dimensions, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

First is the emotional dimension, which, as outlined by Salinas (2017), encompasses three key factors: the bond between teachers and students, the work climate, and the sense of appreciation. These factors play a role in the societal aspects of shaping and reshaping professional identity. Conroy (2002), as cited in Kuswandono, (2013), argued that identity is heavily influenced by societal factors and is considered "socially constructed." Within this study, participants recognized the teacher-student relationship as crucial for successful learning. They envisioned an ideal relationship resembling that of parents and children, aiming to foster a sense of safety, openness, and constructive learning. One participant further elaborated on this perspective.

In my view, the ideal teacher-student relationship should be like that of a caring parent and child. The teacher, acting as a parent figure, understands the students' characteristics and potential. They create opportunities for students to explore, question, and discover their interests. The teacher, like a supportive parent, provides answers that relate to the student's own experiences [T3].

Furthermore, the rest of the participants considered this kind of relationship to enhance the flexibility of classroom communication to boost students' confidence and engagement, which could further improve their learning performances. This has been reviewed by Frymier and Houser (2000) who highlighted the term "affective learning" to refer to the significant impact on cognitive learning based on students' attitudes towards both the content being taught and the teacher.

All participants in the study have implemented this "family-hood" approach in their classrooms, leading to transformations in their professional identity. They highlighted the significance of exercising control and authority as teachers, particularly in rural schools where students have experienced challenging circumstances. This ability to shift authority assists them in managing classroom management and lesson delivery. In their cases, the urgency of authority is to use powers to discipline (disciplinary actions). Macleod et al. (2012, citing Cowley, 2010), also emphasize the role of authority in controlling classroom behavior, further emphasizing the need to establish and uphold authority to manage student behavior and facilitate productive learning. One of the participants shared a story on this particular matter.

During my fresh years of teaching, I overworked my power as a teacher in my classes, creating a gap between me and my students. I used to discipline them hard, like pinching or making kneeling or cleaning the bathroom. They saw me as a harsh teacher and I noticed this made them reluctant to try in class. Until one day, I asked them what made them so struggle. At first, they did not answer, but after several tries, they admitted that I frightened them. I felt really bad because that was not what I meant. After years of years gaining feedback from my students and having my children, I gradually learned how authority should work in class. Since then, I make it a routine to have feedback from students about the class atmosphere [T2].

In this case, the participants learned how a safe, flexible, open, and communicative learning atmosphere influenced their performance in teaching.

Teachers' professional development and their sense of professional identity are profoundly influenced by the working environment, which encompasses various emotional dimensions. According to Cohen and Brown, (2013), a positive school climate plays a crucial role in nurturing teachers' professional learning and growth, encompassing their physical, social, emotional, and psychological well-being. In this study, the participants expressed their idealized vision of a work climate as conducive, supportive, positive, disciplined, and proactive. They emphasized the importance of creating an environment where teachers can both positively motivate others and be motivated themselves, as well as support and be supported by their colleagues. For them, having a positive working climate leads to teachers' successful and effective performances.

When a work climate emphasizes discipline, competence, dedication, and achievement, it serves as a powerful motivator for teachers. These qualities, when prioritized and supported within the work environment, inspire and encourage teachers to improve in their professional roles [T4].

Throughout their teaching journey, the participants credited their colleagues for supporting them, especially emotional and pedagogic support. They admitted that they had learned a lot from the other teachers regarding interpersonal relationships, competency, and pedagogical matters, although they had to go through disagreements and conflicts. When asked about the strategy they used to cope with the situation, the participants considered coping strategies to settle the conflicts by activating problem-solving skills to reach more positive and realistic decisions. As one of the coping strategies, problem-focused coping behaviors are associated with teachers actively engaging their agency within the specific context and utilizing available resources to resolve the tensions they face (Raharjo & Iswandari, 2019). Interestingly, it seems that even experiences teachers may also be hesitant to discuss such a conflict openly and tend

to endure the situations, as noted by Van der et al. (2018). A participant in this study experienced a shift in the working environment after moving out from a school he used to work in for a long time. The school culture was considered to be the main factor. Here is what the participant had to say:

In my current school, I've noticed a significant difference in disciplinary culture compared to my previous school. The atmosphere is quite relaxed, with teachers often arriving late to class, which negatively impacts the students. There is a lack of strict rules regarding littering and maintaining a clean school environment. When I raised these concerns with my colleagues, they did not take any action. I believe using the excuse of it being a rural school is not acceptable. Instead, I took matters into my own hands by organizing weekly clean-up sessions with my students and planting plants. Although my actions seem to have offended some, I stand by my decision to do what is right [T3].

In this case, the participant unintentionally exercised “emotional work” and “emotional labor” to maintain a professional identity as a teacher in a work climate. When the participant suppressed any disappointment and frustration caused by the relaxed-disciplinary culture in the school, the participant presented a positive professional example to the students and colleagues, despite the concerns the participant had. On the other hand, the participant addressed the issue by organizing a cleaning-up activity with students to create a positive and clean environment, which also aligned with the emotional aspect of teaching. This showed how the emotional work was performed. The participant also added, “Whether you are a novice or senior teacher, professionals will have a sense of belonging, thus they will take every responsibility” [T3].

The last emotional dimension factor contributing to rural teachers’ professional identity was the sense of appreciation, as it serves as a tool for strengthening and stabilizing teachers’ identity (Sadek, 2020). The participants in the study emphasized that the most valuable form of appreciation for a teacher is being acknowledged and respected in the community they serve. Being recognized and respected by their peers affirmed their competence and accomplishments, providing a sense of achievement and acceptance. Sadek (2020) further suggests that gaining appreciation from other stakeholders in the school indicates a self-related identity. The participants highlighted that monetary or teaching rewards were seen as supplements to their performance, achievements, and dedication rather than mere remuneration for their work over an extended period. While not an everyday occurrence, the participants expressed that their passion for teaching grew whenever their efforts and performance were acknowledged. This appreciation served as motivation for them to improve pedagogically and socially continually. Therefore, a sense of appreciation plays a vital role in strengthening and stabilizing the professional identity of rural teachers. Being acknowledged and respected by their colleagues and the community, and receiving recognition for their dedication and achievements, fosters a sense of pride and motivates them to excel in their teaching practices.

Secondly is the cognitive dimension that underpins teachers’ needs for professional development. Teachers play a prominent role when it comes to student’s academic achievements. It is based on the assumption that excellent teachers play a crucial role in improving the overall quality of education (Cheng, 1996), and without enhancing their skills and capabilities, significant educational system improvements seem impossible (Guskey, 2002). Therefore, it is essential to maintain and improve teachers’ competencies to support their professional growth, which in turn affects academic outcomes in schools. The study participants emphasized the need for special attention to professional development programs for teachers in rural areas. They highlighted the lack of technology skills, particularly among senior teachers, and the importance of creative and innovative teaching approaches. The participants also

mentioned their specific professional development needs to meet the requirements of the new curriculum.

The new curriculum expects teachers to incorporate technology-based learning, which poses a challenge for many teachers in my school. While using technology has the potential to engage students in learning, as a senior teacher accustomed to traditional methods, I struggle to implement it in my classes. The school organized workshops to help us, but I and other senior teachers find it difficult to keep up with the lessons and manage our administrative responsibilities [T1]. Moreover, most schools and students in Manggarai are not equipped with adequate infrastructure to support technology-based learning [T4]. In terms of building creativity to be innovative, my school has a program where teachers can share what works in class and sometimes do observation [T3].

In this regard, the participants valued their professional development needs significantly. However, they only received partial support, e.g., in pedagogical matters. Technology mastery is an essential aspect that requires attention in their professional development programs.

Macro Contextual Factors in Rural Context

In a previous study by Salinas (2017), macro contextual factors were categorized as being rooted in the authority's requirements to respond to the new curriculum. These factors included bureaucracy, new programs, national testing, teachers' assessment, and supervision from the Ministry of Education. However, in the present study, the researchers excluded national testing from their analysis, taking into account the new educational reform in Indonesia, which now allows for the absence of national examinations. As a result, this study aimed to explore the roles of the other factors mentioned above in shaping the development of teachers' professional identities.

The findings of this study revealed that macro contextual perceptions and practices had a noticeable impact on the cognitive dimension of rural teachers, particularly regarding their professional development needs. One prominent factor identified was bureaucracy, which encompassed various administrative tasks. Participants consistently expressed that while these tasks were meant to be part of their professional responsibilities, they often found them overwhelming, time-consuming (see also Upa & Mbato, 2020), and minimally impactful on their professional growth. Dealing with large volumes of paperwork, the participants frequently experienced burnout and frustration as they struggled to comprehend the purpose and significance of many of these administrative demands. These bureaucratic requirements were perceived as formalities rather than meaningful contributions to their identity development as teachers. One participant's response captured the sentiment shared by the entire group of participants.

I know that all the administrative tasks we do provide opportunities for us to practice organizational and managerial skills and maintain accurate records. However, for us in rural areas, especially senior teachers, we tend to do administrative tasks slowly due to limited access to advanced technology knowledge, limited time to complete the paper, and most importantly, we care more about our students' poor academic performances in our classes. Is not that something more concerning than the administrative tasks? [T1].

A previous study conducted in Chile, as emphasized by Salinas (2017), also emphasized that the excessive paperwork and lack of coherence in the curriculum result in stress, disillusionment, and a sense of frustration and resignation among teachers. These factors ultimately weaken their professional identity. From this perspective, a notable conclusion regarding rural senior teachers is that the bureaucratic demands they face did not significantly contribute to their professional identity growth. Instead, they required additional support and attention in the form of pedagogical training—e.g., specific teaching strategies, instructional methodologies, and student support mechanisms—to effectively address the academic challenges encountered in their classrooms and have a more profound impact on their professional identity and effectiveness as educators. This reason is closely related to the following discussed macro-contextual factor, which was teachers' new professional programs. Participation in Teachers' Professional Development (TPD) programs leads to a significant transformation in the professional identity of educators, encompassing formal education programs, training, and workshops. In Indonesia, pre-service and experienced teachers are encouraged and required to engage in specific programs per government regulations. Guskey (2000) highlights the significance of not only assessing the knowledge and skills acquired by educators through professional development experiences but also considering their practical and effective implementation. However, in this study, which focused on senior teachers, not all of them had the opportunity to participate in the new professional development programs introduced by the government with the new curriculum in Indonesia. Despite their lack of participation, the participants still recognized the importance of providing such programs to educators as a means to equip and inspire novice teachers and influence their senior colleagues by fostering the necessary qualifications and skills. Some of the professional programs the participants had attended included MGMP (Subject Teachers' Forum), KKG (Teacher Working Group), leadership workshops, and inclusive education training. During the interview, two participants who held positions related to the curriculum at their respective schools discussed their recent participation in a program specifically designed for the new curriculum model, *Kurikulum Merdeka*. They acknowledged that the program was theoretically attainable but expressed concerns about the time it would take to implement it fully, particularly in rural areas.

The training was helpful in terms of understanding how the new curriculum works and what possible policies schools can make to implement the curriculum. However, looking at the fact that in rural areas, we have very limited resources, such as human resources and infrastructure, I would say it would take a very long process to implement the curriculum fully [T4].

The participants recognized the potential benefits of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, such as providing flexibility and autonomy to schools and incorporating local wisdom and cultural values into the curriculum. Nevertheless, they emphasized the importance of considering the unique challenges faced by rural schools, such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to educational resources, and a shortage of trained teachers. Furthermore, the participants who had not been able to participate in the training directly expressed their desire for micro-level training at their schools specifically focused on the new curriculum. They believed that having such training, even if not implemented in their schools, would contribute to their preparedness. They argued that being well-prepared would positively impact their capacity and performance, ultimately leading to enhanced professional identity development.

The next macro-contextual factor influencing teachers' professional identity is the presence of teachers' assessments. Bichi (2017) defined teacher performance evaluation as the structured procedure implemented by schools to assess and rate teachers' effectiveness in the classroom.

The outcomes of these evaluations should ideally be utilized to offer constructive feedback to teachers and serve as a guide for their ongoing professional development (ibid, citing Sawchuk, 2015). The participants in the study emphasized the beneficial outcomes of teacher assessment, particularly in terms of professional development, feedback, and reflection. They recognized that assessments play a crucial role in informing teachers' professional development plans by identifying specific areas where they may require additional training, support, or resources. The assessment results can highlight strengths that can be further maintained and areas for improvement that can be addressed to enhance their overall effectiveness as educators. Moreover, the participants acknowledged the value of assessments in providing teachers with constructive feedback. This reflective process enables them to make necessary adjustments and enhancements in their instructional methods, classroom management techniques, and overall pedagogical approaches. According to the participants, the assessment of their professional identity was not solely based on feedback from higher stakeholders. They also valued student input, reflective learning practices, and informal conversations with parents, as these factors significantly impacted their development as teachers. Through this feedback and reflection, teachers can continuously refine their teaching practices and strive for continuous improvement. The final macro-contextual factor that influences teachers' professional identity is the supervision conducted by supervisors. Altun and Sarkaya (2020) referred to Taymaz (2011) who defined supervision in education as the provision of professional guidance and support, provided when and where necessary at all levels of education. It encompasses a comprehensive process involving analysis, evaluation, correction, and development (Basar, 1998). Supervision includes various administrative, contextual, and educational actions (Wiles & Bondi, 2000) and serves as a central aspect for enhancing teaching practices (Glanz, 2009). This research focused on gathering perceptions from senior teachers in rural areas who had frequently undergone supervision. According to their perspective, supervision was considered a role that involves evaluating and motivating teachers to meet teaching qualifications and expectations. It aimed to enhance teaching qualities by encouraging reflection and problem-solving based on meaningful feedback provided. During the interview, some participants shared how the supervision program enlightened and motivated them even more.

I once had an unforgettable experience when a local Ministry of Education supervisor observed my class. Before that, I wasn't very active or well-known as a teacher. I felt anxious and surprised when the supervisor decided to visit my class with only a ten-minute notice. I handed him my lesson plan, and he seemed uncertain. I had mixed feelings as the class started and couldn't recall exactly what happened during the lesson. However, when the class ended, he shook my hand and said that although my lesson plan wasn't what he expected, the class itself exceeded his expectations. He praised me as a great example and shared this with others in the teachers' room. This attention was overwhelming, as I had never been the center of attention before. From that point on, I received more recognition, and it felt incredibly rewarding to have a positive influence on others [T2].

In this case, the supervision provided the participant with confidence and motivation through acknowledgment and positive feedback. While the administrative tasks, such as the lesson plan, were noted as an aspect to consider during the supervision, the positive feedback played a crucial role in shaping the participant's belief in their capabilities. However, another case from the interviews highlighted a participant who felt dissatisfied because the supervision focused primarily on administrative matters, with only minimal comments on the teaching approach. This discrepancy became a concern for the participant.

I was unsure whether the supervisor's reluctance to provide feedback on my performance in the classroom was due to his younger age or some other reason. Being an experienced teacher, I genuinely wanted to learn and adopt new teaching techniques and methods that were not outdated. I realized that I wasn't performing well based on my students' reactions. When I asked the supervisor about my performance, he simply said everything was okay, which left me feeling upset. I decided to approach the principal and inquire if there was any feedback I should address. To my surprise, the only aspect that required improvement was related to administrative tasks, such as student assessments and records. It made me feel like the whole process was merely a formality [T2].

This case highlighted a failure in supervision to provide teachers with constructive feedback, which ultimately hindered the motivation of both average and good teachers to improve their performance. As Marshall (2005) emphasized, evaluations often involve making judgments about teachers; however, many evaluation instruments allow supervisors to give a generic "satisfactory" rating without offering specific information about the teacher's performance. Consequently, teachers are left uncertain about their standing about clearly defined performance standards and lack clear guidance on how to enhance their teaching practices.

CONCLUSION

This research has explored the perceptions and reflections of four senior teachers in rural areas regarding their professional identity development. The study examined micro-contextual factors, such as emotional and cognitive dimensions, and macro-contextual factors related to educational demands. The findings indicated that all participants perceived these factors as positively influencing their professional identity, highlighting the positive impacts they had experienced throughout their careers. The participants valued the interactions between teachers and students, as well as among colleagues, considering them crucial for creating a conducive, effective, and communicative working environment. They also highly appreciated the recognition and acknowledgment received from various stakeholders within the school community, viewing it as a valuable appreciation of their hard work.

The participants demonstrated enthusiasm and a positive attitude towards participating in professional development programs that cater to their professional needs. This included engaging in teacher assessments and supervision, despite the possibility of receiving feedback they may not be entirely satisfied with. Regarding bureaucratic or administrative responsibilities, the participants did not perceive them as significant contributors to their professional identity development. Despite acknowledging the time-consuming nature and high demands of administrative tasks, they fulfilled these responsibilities as part of their commitment to the job.

This study's focus on both micro and macro contextual factors may limit the depth of understanding regarding their specific impacts on professional identity. The broad scope of the study may result in less detailed information on the complex interactions between these factors and professional identity development. Future studies could focus on exploring individual micro and macro contextual factors in greater detail, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of their specific impact on professional identity. It is important to acknowledge that the participants in this study were senior teachers in rural areas, and their perceptions and practices may differ from those of teachers in other locations or demographic contexts. Future

research could aim to include a diverse range of participants to capture the variations in perceptions and practices across different settings.

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