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Teachers in the Crosshairs: A Discourse Analysis of Social Media Discrimination in the Philippines

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Abstract

Discriminatory discourses against educators persist as a significant issue in society. In the age of social media and technology, various platforms have become powerful spaces where these negative narratives and commentaries are not only widely circulated but also increasingly normalized. This study examines how teachers are represented as social actors within discriminatory discourses on social media in the Philippines. Using Theo van Leeuwen's Social Actor Representation framework, the study analyzes different discourses across social media platforms, specifically Facebook, Reddit, X (formerly known as Twitter), and TikTok, from 2020 to 2025. It identifies the themes and strategies through which teachers, as social actors, are represented. The results confirm that in online discourses, teachers are represented in various negative ways, such as a pressure epicenter, inconsiderate, unprofessional, irresponsible, incompetent, and even as injustice perpetrator. This study underscores the need for educators, institutions, and policymakers to address the pervasive negative representations of teachers online and to promote more balanced, respectful discourse. It further contributes to understanding how language shapes public perceptions of teachers and emphasizes the importance of integrating digital ethics, media literacy, and informed educational policy to protect and strengthen professional communities.

Keywords: social actor, teachers, discrimination, social media, Philippines

1. Introduction

Educators, who play a key role in shaping the nation's future, are often targets of discriminatory discourses, negative stereotypes, and biased narratives on social media. Examples include the perception of teaching as women's work or, in some cases, as mere babysitting; the portrayal of teachers as lazy; and the expectation that teachers engage in compulsory self-sacrifice (Bongco & Ancho, 2020; Gray, 2022; Sapir & Shtelman, 2024; Whittaker, 2020). This is concerning because, as Demirkol (2022) notes, exposure to negative stereotypes about teachers, particularly those spread by the media, can shape public perceptions of both teachers and the teaching profession. Additionally, Rajbhandari and Rana (2022) argue that such content on social media can undermine the effectiveness of skilled educators and diminish their professional motivation.

Numerous studies have supported the existence of the issue above. Nesje (2023) stated that teachers have been traditionally attributed to females, depicting them as caring and empathetic, which is often not the case for male teachers. As a result of gender bias, men became less likely to seek a career in early education (Moss-Racusin et al., 2022). Furthermore, Collins (2020) stated that teachers are being asked to become babysitters, causing them frustration. This is often tied to early childhood teachers, as they have been labeled as glorified babysitters in both academic and public domains internationally (Gibbons, 2020). This stereotype results in further undervaluing teachers and their professional effort in extending knowledge and building students' characters.

Teachers are also perceived as lazy. Aronson et al. (2021) found that this perception arises from the notion that experienced teachers tend to adopt a one-sided approach, which is misinterpreted as a lack of willingness to learn. Conversely, teachers are simultaneously seen as martyrs who will do anything for their students, carrying the burden of unrealistic expectations. Phrases such as "tribute" and "lambs sent to slaughter" (Reneau, 2020) reinforce this image of self-sacrifice, suggesting that not all teachers can meet this ideal (Gray, 2022).

Discrimination against teachers is also evident in the Philippines. Lozada et al. (2024) reported that transgender women teachers

in Negros Oriental were unfairly treated and misgendered by locals, often being labeled as weak and incompetent, which undermined their credibility as educators. Similarly, ESL teachers in Taguig have faced disdain from international students due to their accents, despite demonstrating strong language proficiency and pedagogical expertise (Jung & Choe, 2024). These examples underline how biases and stereotypes can shape perceptions of teachers' professional abilities. Such discrimination not only affects teachers' social and psychological well-being but may also influence their students' learning experiences.

Although teacher discrimination has been studied in some contexts, research specifically examining discrimination based on race and ethnicity remains scarce, particularly in the Philippine setting (Arar & Tlili, 2024; Pit-ten Cate et al., 2021). Existing studies largely focus on teachers' lived experiences in traditional or general settings, leaving unexamined how teachers are represented and marginalized on social media. In particular, the application of the Social Actor Representation framework to analyze online discriminatory discourse targeting teachers is virtually unexplored. This study addresses these gaps by documenting previously overlooked instances of online discrimination, providing insights into its social and psychological effects on both educators and their students (Kahveci, 2023; Walther, 2022).

The purpose of this study is to analyze how teachers are represented as actors in various discriminatory discourses on social media. Without a doubt, analyzing how teachers are represented in discriminatory discourse on social media advances quality education (SDG 4), reduces inequalities (SDG 10), and promotes strong institutions (SDG 16). By identifying biases and unfair treatment, the study highlights barriers that may undermine teaching effectiveness, limit access to equitable learning experiences, and negatively impact students' educational outcomes, thus promoting inclusive and high-quality education. In terms of reduced inequalities, the research exposes discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity, or socio-economic background, providing insights to inform interventions that ensure fair treatment and equal opportunities for all teachers and learners. By shedding light on harmful online narratives, the study also supports the development of more accountable and respectful educational institutions, fostering transparency, professional integrity, and a culture of justice and equity in education.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study aligns with the traditions of discourse analysis, a method that examines speech or written texts, here, social media posts, beyond the level of individual sentences (Kamalu & Osisanwo, 2015). To interpret the data, the Representing Social Actors framework developed by Theo Van Leeuwen (2008) was employed. This framework analyzes how language represents social actors, specifically teachers, in social media discourse.

Using this framework, the researchers explored how social media discourse shapes teachers' public image. For this study, only the strategies and categories under Inclusion were applied, as the data specifically focused on identifiable social actors. Data falling under Exclusion, which does not specify or include social actors, were not considered, as they would not provide information relevant to the study's objectives.

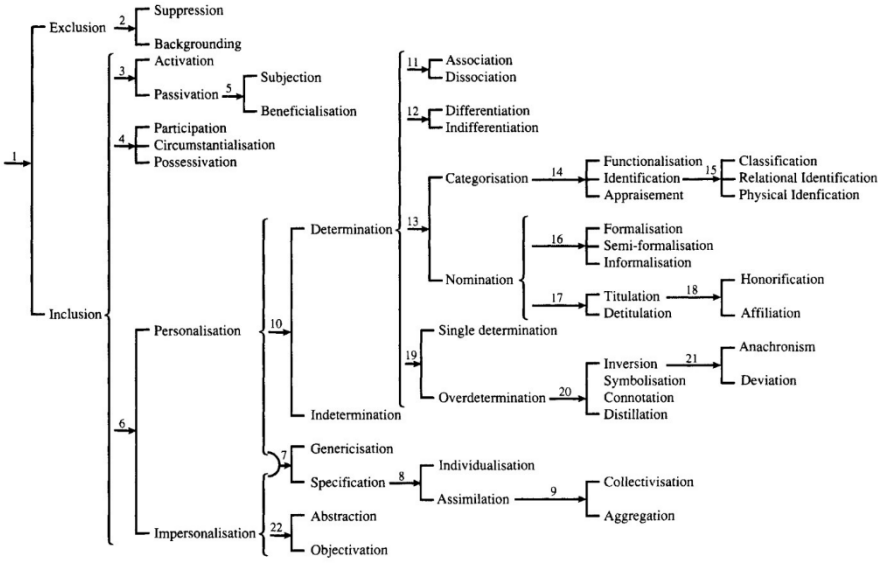


Figure 1. The representation of social actors in discourse by Theo Van Leeuwen

2.2 Linguistic Data

The researchers examined discriminatory posts or remarks against teachers in the Philippines, collected from social media platforms, particularly Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and Reddit, between 2020 and 2025.

Discriminatory posts, stereotypical remarks, and prejudiced narratives can be encapsulated into the term discursive discrimination. Discursive discrimination refers to the unfavorable treatment of members of a specific group through linguistic means. In this study, it manifested through various forms such as: presenting a group as inferior in comparison to the other, negative labels, descriptions, associations, explicit proposals or support for normalization of unfavorable treatments, and objectification where people discuss social actors as if they lacked feelings, needs, and wishes and other ways as if they were things (Boreus, 2006). To ensure a saturated data set and the prevalence of the issue at hand, the researchers collected 129 discourses, of which only 70 were deemed valuable to the study. Considering the language used by netizens, these discriminatory discourses were expressed in English, Filipino, and Cebuano (also known as Bisaya) languages.

2.3 Data Analysis

This study used Miles and Huberman's Qualitative Data Analysis (1984). This method comprises four phases: data collection, data reduction, data display, and concluding. This provides a clear structure for analyzing a large amount of data, with an effectively arranged figure for easy interpretation.

Data Collection. The data have been collected from public posts and comments across various social media platforms, specifically Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and Reddit. Keywords and hashtags, such as "teachers," "educators," "professors," and "teacher rant," have been utilized to narrow down the posts and comments with discourses essential for this study. Posts and comments containing discriminative remarks, prejudiced and biased content, and derogatory statements towards teachers within the Philippine context were the ones chosen. They also must be from the years 2020-2025, using either English, Tagalog, or Bisaya as the primary language.

A consent form informing the individuals involved is not obligatory; however, the researchers conformed to the ethical guidelines and the Philippine law, Republic Act 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act. This includes anonymizing the usernames and profile pictures of the participants to protect their privacy. Furthermore, the researchers will maintain integrity and confidentiality by ensuring that the collected data will be used solely for the completion of this research, and that it does not contain personal comments or attacks that may cause discomfort or harm to any individual.

Data Reduction. The researchers gathered a total of 129 discriminatory discourses shared publicly on the aforementioned social media platforms. As this step includes filtering the data, posts and comments that: (1) were initially part of a conversation but could not stand on their own as a single thought, (2) were initially part of a conversation but excludes the teacher as a social actor when isolated, and (3) carries the same words and thoughts with another data, were discarded. This has brought the data down to 70. Public posts and comments found were classified based on themes or the single thought they shared.

Data Display. In this phase, the researchers organized the reduced data into visual and textual formats. This visual display included tables that organized the data according to the representation of the teachers. These displays helped present patterns of discriminatory discourse, showing not just the frequency of certain narratives but also how they partially reveal perceptions or treatment of teachers. The textual format is a summary of the tables presented in the results and discussion section of the study. It highlights specific data that best represents the thematic thought they share.

Drawing Conclusions. Lastly, this phase focused on interpreting the data displayed to identify the underlying patterns, meanings, and implications of the discriminatory discourses in relation to teachers as the actors. This allowed the researchers to link various narratives within the same theme, involving Van Leeuwen's Representing Social Action framework, and explain how these narratives were constructed to brand teachers with specific discriminatory social roles and labels. The findings highlighted how certain forms of prejudice, bias, and stereotypes may subtly manifest but carry significant social impact. The researchers conducted multiple rounds of review to ensure the analysis aligned with the original objectives and accurately reflected the data collected.

3. Results

3.1 Discursive Representations of Teachers in Philippine Discriminatory Discourses

The researchers collected a total of 70 instances of discursive discrimination from online sources. This section presents a selection of the discourses that evidently reflect the negative perceptions towards teachers shared by participants. From the data, six overarching themes emerged regarding how teachers are represented: (A) Teachers as Pressure Epicenter, (B) Teachers as Inconsiderate, (C) Teachers as Unprofessional, (D) Teachers as Irresponsible, (E) Teachers as Incompetent, and (F) Teachers as Injustice Perpetrators. Using Theo Van Leeuwen's (2008) framework of representing social actors, these discourses are analyzed in terms of strategies such as genericisation, individualisation, functionalisation, appraisement, activation, and classification.

Teachers as Pressure Epicenter. Teachers are often depicted as imposing high expectations that cause emotional or academic strain. In these discourses, teachers are represented as active agents (activation) who directly impact students, while students are passivized. At the same time, there is often negative appraisal (appraisement) of the teachers' behavior. Examples of these discourses are presented below:

> A1. “They are just flexing their achievements to further pressure their students and sing ‘when I was in college’ medley.” [RDDT1]
>
> A2. “I don't get the hype why some teachers PRESSURE their students, and HUMILIATE them in the whole class, for me it's really a big impact for students and can be the reason for their academic stress.” [TKTK 9]

In A1, teachers are activated as initiators of stressful actions, while students are passively affected. The phrase “flexing their achievements” carries implicit appraisement, judging the behavior as inconsiderate. Meanwhile, in A2, the verbs “pressure” and “humiliate” illustrate activation and appraisement, emphasizing teachers as agents causing harm and evaluating their actions negatively.

Teachers as Inconsiderate. Teachers are represented as disregarding students’ circumstances and prioritizing their own rules, affecting learners negatively. They are represented through genericisation, individualisation, activation, and often appraisement.

Genericisation depicts teachers as a generalized group, presenting behaviors as common rather than isolated. For example:

> B1. “I hope ma-realize ng ibang teachers na learners ang kaharap nila and not professionals.” [TKTK27] (I hope other teachers realize that they are facing learners and not professionals.)

The phrase “ibang teachers” (other teachers) constructs a generalized group identity, suggesting that the behavior is widespread. Teachers are also activated as agents imposing unrealistic expectations, while appraisement highlights the negative judgment of their actions. Other examples of genericisation are shown below, where both examples use the plural term “teachers,” representing inconsideration as a common trait.

> B2. “Magbibigay ng activity like role play ang teachers ng walang plano? Grabe yorn.” [X4] (The teachers giving an activity like a role play without a plan? That's too much.)
>
> B3. “for teachers who are inconsiderate to all things. mapa deadline yan, or sa instructions, di mawawala yung inconsideration.” [TKTK29] (For teachers who are inconsiderate to all things, whether it’s deadlines or instructions, that lack of consideration is always there.)

Further, individualisation identifies specific teachers as targets, highlighting personal responsibility for inconsiderate actions:

> B4. “Haneppp ka mam! Pwede naman kahapon ka nagsend no? paano pa mag-aaral mga students mo niyan. sumbong kaya kita kay Father A?? Juskolord.” [X6] (Wow, Ma'am! You could have sent it yesterday, right? How are your students supposed to study now? Maybe I should report you to Father A? Oh my gosh.)

The use of “ma’am” singles out a particular teacher, showing individualisation. The teacher is also activated as an agent who causes stress for students through their actions.

Finally, activation emphasizes teachers as active agents who carry out actions that affect students:

> B5. “Nagpapagawa ng activities pero suspended classes? 150 words ang essay in 5 minutes?” [X1] (Assigning activities even though classes are suspended? A 150-word essay in 5 minutes?)
>
> B6. “bat kaya ganun mga teachers namin ngayon minsan lang naman sila mag turo pero kung makapag bigay ng activities and pt's daig mo pa robot” [TKTK12] (Why are our teachers like that nowadays? They rarely teach, but when it comes to giving activities and performance tasks, it’s like they expect us to be robots.)

Even without explicitly naming teachers, their actions position them as responsible agents. The discourse combines activation and appraisement, highlighting both the act and the negative evaluation.

Teachers as Unprofessional. Teachers are depicted as exhibiting behaviors that are inconsistent with professional expectations. Teachers are represented through the following: genericisation (representing teachers as a general group), individualisation (specifying teachers), appraisement (evaluating their personal qualities), aggregation (quantifying teachers), and activation (depicting teachers as active agents). The following discourses illustrate these strategies in relation to unprofessional behavior.

Genericisation represents teachers as a broad group rather than as specific individuals. For example:

> C1. “...pera lang ang nasa mind and kadalasan hindi sila nagtuturo kahit isang beses.”

> [RDIT 2] (...money is everything they have in mind and most of the time, they don't even teach.)
>
> C2. “tapos ipapahiya sa harap ng klase? you're supposedly our second parents lol, and you're asking for some RESPECT?” [TKTK33] (And then you humiliate us in front of the whole class? You’re supposed to be our second parents lol, and yet you're asking for RESPECT?)

Both statements present teachers collectively, suggesting that unprofessional behavior is widely observed (genericisation with appraisement embedded).

Individualisation identifies teachers as specific persons, emphasizing personal responsibility for unprofessional actions:

> C3. “SPED teacher ng anak ko nagc-cellphone lang always... hindi hands-on.” [FB9] (My child’s SPED teacher is not hands-on and is always on her phone.)
>
> C4. “I remember one teacher from grade school who embarrassed me in front of my classmates because I couldn't solve a math equation.” [TKTK 2]

In C3, the phrase “my child’s SPED teacher” points to a particular individual, while in C4, “one teacher” refers to a specific, though unnamed, person. These statements emphasize that unprofessional conduct can be traced to identifiable teachers.

Appraisement evaluates teachers’ personal qualities, often highlighting negative traits:

> C5. “Palitan ng matalinong at hnd tamad² na teacher na puro cp..legit may ganun teacher kasi ganyan teacher ng anak q sa G1…” [FB2] (Replace the teacher with smart and not lazy ones who are always on their phones... legit, teachers like those exist because that's the kind of teacher my child has in Grade 1.)
>
> C6. “When the quiet person in your class gets humiliated by the prof for not participating…” [TKTK 7]

Aggregation represents teachers as part of a subset, highlighting that the unprofessional behavior is present but not universal:

> C7. “...some teachers are embarrassing their students for making a mistake.” [TKTK 3]

The term “some” suggests that only a portion of teachers engage in this behavior, providing a sense of scale without specifying exact numbers.

Activation represents teachers as active agents carrying out harmful actions that directly affect students:

> C8. “many teachers are heavily biased at ipinapahiya ang mga estudyante nang may mura pa, kahit ang mga estudyante na walang ginagawa.” [FB10] (Many teachers are heavily biased and shame students with curse words, even those who did nothing wrong.)
>
> C9. It’s ironic how some teachers blame their students, without even bothering to find out what really happened, publicly humiliate them by comparing them to other classes, and call them "worthless" and "malandi." They don't even teach anything! What kind of licensed teacher does that?” [TKTK32]

In C8 and C9, teachers are depicted as actively engaging in harmful behaviors, such as shaming, blaming, and humiliating students, establishing them as responsible agents whose actions negatively impact learners.

Teachers as Irresponsible. Teachers are depicted as irresponsible, highlighting a perceived failure to fulfill the duties expected of their profession. They are represented through several strategies: genericisation, which generalizes teachers; activation, which represents teachers as active agents; functionalisation, which evaluates teachers through their role; appraisement, which assesses teachers based on personal qualities; and individualisation, which specifies teachers as individuals. The following discourses illustrate how teachers are represented as irresponsible:

Genericisation presents teachers as a broad group rather than focusing on specific individuals:

> D1. “Ayun nga, may Masterals Degree, pero hindi sila passionate sa pag share ng knowledge. Which is nakaka disappoint kasi why accept the offer kung 'di mo pala kaya panindigan sjxjx.” [RDDT19] (Sure, they possess a master’s degree, but they’re not even passionate about sharing their knowledge, which is disappointing. Why accept the offer when you can’t even take responsibility for it?)
>
> D2. “sa college madami WAHAHAHAHA lakas ng loob mang bagsak di naman nagtuturo” [TKTK20] (There are many in college—WAHAHAHAHA. They have the guts to fail students even though they don't teach.)

In D1, the pronoun “they” suggests that all teachers with a master’s degree are being criticized for lacking passion and responsibility. Similarly, D2 generalizes college teachers as a group who fail students without fulfilling their purpose which is to teach.

Activation emphasizes teachers as active agents whose actions negatively impact students:

> .D3. “Dapat iphase-out rin yung mga teacher na hindi naman nagtuturo pero Nambabagsak.” [TKTK11] (Teachers who do not teach but still fail students should be phased out.)

In D3, the phrases “do not teach” and “fail students” attribute responsibility directly to the teacher, representing them as individuals whose actions harm students’ academic progress.

Functionalisation represents teachers through their professional role, highlighting a mismatch between expected duties and actual behavior:

> D4. “pinsagutan samin ng teacher namin sa science yung "what i have learned" seryoso ba sya? what if tanungin din namin siya ng "what did she teach?" [X10] (Our teacher in science made us answer "what I have learned", is she serious? What if we ask her too, "what did she teach?")
>
> D5. “Professors exist to guide you... kaso yung iba, literal na hindi ka papasukan ng isang sem.” [TKTK35] (Professors exist to guide you, however, others literally won’t report inside the classroom for a whole sem.)

In D4 and D5, the teachers are evaluated based on their role as educators. D4 highlights the teacher’s failure to teach effectively, while D5 critiques professors who neglect their guiding responsibilities, emphasizing the gap between their role and actions.

Appraisement evaluates teachers based on their personal qualities, often negatively:

> D6. “parang useless lang position nila dahil ibibigay lang rin pala ang modules.” [RDDT16] (The position ends up being useless because they just hand out modules anyway.)
>
> D7. “Suspect! Teacher na laging nag-uuwi ng paperwork pero hindi naman ginagawa.” [FB4] (Suspect! A teacher who always brings paperwork home but never actually does it.)

In D6, the word “useless” conveys a strong judgment about the teacher’s effectiveness. D7 critiques a teacher for negligence, highlighting irresponsibility through a perceived failure to complete tasks.

Activation also appears in actions that demonstrate direct harm or neglect:

> D8. “Pinagalitan mo yung students because they have a problem? Eh di ba role mo nga is tulungan at turuan sila masolve yung problem? Pag nagalit ka, what are you teaching them? You forget to teach that problems can be solved and how they can be solved.” [X7] (You scolded the students just because they have a problem? Isn’t it your role to help and teach them how to solve it? When you get angry, what are you teaching them? You forget to teach that problems can be solved and how they can be solved.)

In D8, words such as “scolded,” “get angry,” and “forget to teach” depict the teacher as an active agent initiating behaviors that neglect student support, demonstrating irresponsibility in both action and professional judgment.

Teachers as Incompetent. In online discourse, teachers are often represented as incompetent, implying that they lack the necessary skills, knowledge, or effectiveness to perform their roles effectively. In the analysis of Theo Van Leeuwen's representing social actors framework, teachers are represented through the following: genericisation, which involves viewing teachers generally; appraisement, which involves evaluating the teacher's quality; functionalisation, which involves assessing the teacher's role; and classification, which involves categorizing teachers into different classes. The following online discourses depict the teachers as irresponsible:

> E1. “mahirap maghanap ng professionals na willing magturo, at mas lalong mahirap maghanap ng professionals na magaling magturo.” [RDDT6] (It’s hard to find professionals who are willing to teach, and it’s even harder to find professionals who are good at teaching.)
>
> E2. “College: Where somehow you always end up with the worst professor teaching the most important class.” [TKTK 4]

In these discourses, the teachers were represented through genericisation. In E1, the term "professionals" is used as a broad, collective group rather than pointing to any individual teachers. In E2, the term "the worst professor" does not refer to a specific individual but to a generalized type of professor you can encounter. It highlighted the common experience in college of having the worst professors teaching important subjects. In addition,

> E3. “The grades they give are as low as the quality of their teaching.” [TKTK 1]
>
> E4. “Hindi lang students, mababa rin kalidad karamihan sa mga guro natin ngayon.” [TKTK17] (It's not just the students; the quality of most of our teachers nowadays is also low.)

In these discourses, appraisement was used to represent the teachers. In E3, the teachers were criticized and evaluated based on their inability to provide quality and standard educational skills. In E4, "the quality of most of our teachers... is low" is making a value judgment about their competence and effectiveness. Furthermore,

> E5. “us ranting sa gc abt this one teacher na hindi maayos mag explain abt the lesson but ang hilig magbigay ng mga test” [TKTK31] (Us ranting in the group chat about that one teacher who can’t explain the lesson properly but just loves giving tests.)

The teachers in this discourse were represented through functionalisation. In E5, the teacher is identified based on their professional role and job. The representation of teachers as someone who can't explain yet likes giving tests highlighted their roles within the classroom as educators. Moreover,

> E6. “Oftentimes, they are just engineers, doctors, or professionals na nag-apply lang sa uni without experience or passion for teaching. I doubt they even took the Prof. Ed. units. I had profs who are really smart on their subjects but suck at teaching. Ganun ata talaga sa colleges.” [RDDT15] (Oftentimes, they are just engineers, doctors, or professionals who are applying in university without experience or passion for teaching. I doubt they even took Prof. Ed. units. I had profs who are really smart on their subjects but suck at teaching. Maybe that’s how college works.)

In this discourse, the teacher was represented through classification. In E6, teachers are categorized by their background professions, such as "engineers," "doctors," or "professionals". The teachers were classified into different categories, and their differences and backgrounds were highlighted.

Teachers as Injustice Perpetrator. Teachers are often represented as unfair, being represented as individuals who impose unreasonable grading systems or treat students unequally. Using Theo Van Leeuwen's Representing Social Actors framework, teachers are represented through several strategies: appraisement, which evaluates teachers based on their qualities; genericisation, which depicts teachers in general terms; classification, which categorizes teachers; individualisation, which specifies particular teachers; and activation, which presents teachers as active agents responsible for their actions. The following discourses illustrate how teachers are represented as unfair:

Appraisement evaluates the teacher’s personal qualities, often with a negative judgment:

> F1. “...ang kuripot magbigay ng grades eh maayos naman ang performance namin lahat, sumakit pa nga katawan ko para lang maging originality ang sayaw namin tapos 82?!!!” [X2] (...so stingy in giving grades even though all our performances were good. My body even hurt just to boost the originality in criteria, then we only got an 82?!!!)

In F1, the phrase “stingy in giving grades” reflects a negative judgment on the teacher’s behavior, representing them as overly strict and unwilling to recognize students’ efforts fairly.

Genericisation depicts teachers as a broad group, emphasizing collective behavior:

> F2. “Marami pa nga mga teacher na galit kapag ang pagtake mo ng notes ay gamit laptop, mas gusto pa nila na magsulat ka, for no good reason.” [RDDT5] (There are many teachers who get mad when you take notes using a laptop; they would rather have you write by hand, for no good reason.)

Here, the phrase “many teachers” generalizes this behavior, suggesting that unfair or unreasonable reactions are common among teachers, not limited to specific individuals.

Classification categorizes teachers based on specific attributes or roles:

> F3. “why wont dlsu fix their ARTSCOMM teachers super baba magbigay, dami na nagrereklamo, super unreasonable na nila pero wala lang ???? [FB6] (Why won’t DLSU fix their ARTSCOMM teachers? They give very low grades, many are complaining, they

are super unreasonable, but nothing is being done.)

In F3, the term "ARTSCOMM teachers" classifies the teachers by their department, highlighting a particular subgroup whose actions are criticized.

Individualisation identifies specific teachers as the source of unfairness:

> F4. "To that one subject teacher sa SHS, sana masaya ka po na madami kang naalis na honor students. You're the reason kung bakit wala sa honors ngayon yung consistent simula elem." [FB8] (To that one subject teacher in SHS, I hope you're happy that you caused so many honor students to be removed. You're the reason why someone who's been consistently on the honors list since elementary isn't there anymore.)

The phrase "that one teacher" specifies a particular individual, directing blame for the negative outcome of students losing their honors.

Activation represents teachers as active agents responsible for the unfair actions:

> F5. "ma'am bkt yng ibang teacher ang daya sa grade kasi po ako na palagi nag rerecite tapos yng ibang hindi nag rerecite sia pa yng mataas yng grade." [TKTK19] (Ma'am, why do some teachers give unfair grades? I always participate in recitation, but those who don't end up getting higher grades.)

In F5, the phrase "teachers give unfair grades" attributes the action directly to the teachers, presenting them as active agents who enact the perceived injustice.

4. Discussion

The primary aim of this paper is to analyze how teachers, as social actors, are represented in various online discriminatory discourses. Our analysis shows that teachers are frequently depicted through discursive themes such as being pressure epicenter, inconsiderate, unprofessional, irresponsible, incompetent, and unfair. Using Theo Van Leeuwen's Representing Social Actors framework, we found that these representations employ several strategies, notably genericisation, individualisation, functionalisation, appraisement, activation, and classification. These representations do more than describe teachers; they erode the public's respect and trust in the teaching profession and contribute to the broader negative image of education. Over time, such representations gradually undermine teachers' credibility as professionals.

Teachers are often depicted as sources of pressure and as inconsiderate toward students. Research has shown that teacher expectations can significantly affect student performance (Workman, 2012). In the discourses we analyzed, teachers were criticized for imposing excessive academic pressure while simultaneously bragging about their achievements. These expectations, combined with pressure from parents, were seen as negatively affecting students' performance. Discursive strategies such as genericisation, appraisement, individualisation, and activation were frequently used to represent teachers in this way, framing them as out of touch with the realities students face. These representations reinforce a narrative that positions teachers in a negative light.

However, studies in the Philippine primary education context suggest that high teacher expectations can improve student literacy outcomes (William et al., 2025). When expectations are accompanied by support and guidance, they serve as both encouragement and challenge, motivating students to perform their best. How students perceive these expectations plays a crucial role: the same expectation can be seen as supportive or oppressive, depending on the teacher's approach and communication.

Teachers were also represented as irresponsible and unprofessional, accused of neglecting their duties, showing little commitment, and failing to fulfill their roles as educators. Some were depicted as being motivated by money rather than teaching, while others were criticized for being present in name only. Previous research indicates that professors' attitudes significantly influence students' confidence and effort in learning (Melon-Galvez, 2016). Teachers' engagement and professional behavior directly affect how students perceive not only them as individuals but also the teaching profession. Discursive strategies such as genericisation, individualisation, functionalisation, and activation were common in these representations.

Teaching is a profession with many responsibilities that extend far beyond delivering lessons (Magtalas & Eduvala, 2024). These negative representations often ignore the fact that teachers juggle multiple tasks simultaneously. Research shows that intensification of teachers' workloads is a critical issue that affects not only the teachers' well-being but also the quality of education (Lagawid, 2024). Expecting teachers to excel at every task without considering these factors is unrealistic and can unfairly foster negative perceptions.

Another prominent theme was the representation of teachers as incompetent. Teachers were portrayed as lacking instructional skill, using rigid or inflexible teaching methods, and demonstrating insufficient mastery of their subjects. Teachers are crucial for delivering knowledge, supporting students' development, and fostering holistic growth (Go et al., 2020). Yet the analyzed discourses show growing public concern about educators' quality and competency. Strategies like appraisement,

functionalisation, genericisation, and classification were used to convey these perceptions. It is also important to note that these representations may not fully reflect reality. Factors such as insufficient instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, excessive workloads (Castro et al., 2023), out-of-field teaching (Katigbak & Andal, 2023), and non-education graduates teaching in tertiary institutions (Somosot & Relox, 2023) can limit teachers' performance. These structural and systemic challenges can make teachers appear incompetent, even when they are doing their best under difficult conditions.

Finally, teachers were also portrayed as perpetrators of injustice, primarily regarding grading practices and classroom rules. Fairness in teaching is essential for students' motivation and well-being (Hong et al., 2022). Discourses often depicted teachers as unfair or biased, employing strategies such as appraisement, genericisation, and classification to frame teachers as responsible for these injustices. While many studies focus on classroom fairness, it is important to recognize that students' perceptions are shaped not only by teachers' actions but also by broader institutional and societal factors (Rasooli et al., 2022). Grading standards, rules, and classroom policies are influenced by school systems, curricular requirements, and social expectations, which complicate attributing unfairness solely to individual teachers

Overall, the discourses analyzed in this study reflect a complex mixture of student perceptions, societal expectations, and structural challenges in education. While teachers are frequently depicted negatively online, these representations often overlook the broader context in which educators operate. Recognizing these nuances is crucial for understanding the gap between public perception and the realities of teaching.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive look into how teachers are represented as social actors in online discriminatory discourses. The findings show that educators are often represented as sources of pressure, inconsiderate, unprofessional, irresponsible, incompetent, and perpetrators of injustice. Using Theo Van Leeuwen's Representing Social Actors framework, these representations were analyzed using strategies such as genericisation, individualisation, aggregation, functionalisation, appraisement, activation, and classification. The analysis shows that such discursive strategies do more than describe behaviors; they actively construct a narrative that damages teachers' credibility, challenges their professionalism, and diminishes public trust in the teaching profession. In many discourses, the teachers' actions, intentions, and contextual challenges are disregarded, leading to a one-sided representation that centers primarily on blame and perceived failures.

The study also stresses the intricacy behind these negative representations. Teachers are often criticized for actions that are influenced by structural and systemic issues, such as excessive workloads, a lack of instructional materials, out-of-field teaching, insufficient professional development, etc. Online discourses, however, rarely acknowledge these factors; instead, they represent teachers as solely accountable for students' academic struggles or classroom challenges. This misrepresentation not only creates unrealistic expectations for educators but also contributes to emotional fatigue, burnout, and declining morale. Without a doubt, these discourses imperil teachers' professional identity and well-being, which, in turn, can greatly impact the quality of education students receive.

The findings further suggest that teacher-student interactions and the broader educational system both play a role in shaping these perceptions. Teachers are often depicted as unfair or biased in grading, rigid in teaching methods, or inattentive to students' needs. Yet, misunderstandings, communication gaps, or a lack of awareness of classroom policies frequently compound these perceptions. This only points to the need for much greater transparency, dialogue, and structured support systems within educational institutions. By all odds, this effort to address both teacher behavior and systemic constraints may lead to a much more balanced narrative that fairly reflects educators' efforts, challenges, and responsibilities.

By all odds, the study emphasizes the shared responsibility of all stakeholders, teachers, students, parents, and institutions in shaping a positive image of education. Teachers can be supported through professional development programs focused on moral classroom management, student-centered practices, and up-to-date pedagogical strategies. Parents and students should be guided on responsible digital behavior and effective communication channels within the school. Academic institutions can play a vital role by implementing feedback mechanisms, promoting inclusivity and diversity in hiring and orientation, and providing clear policies and manageable workloads. These measures can help counter harmful narratives, protect teachers' professional credibility, and enhance public trust in the education system, thereby fostering a more supportive and effective learning environment.

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