

Lived Experiences of Filipino Preschool Teachers Working Abroad

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15066913

Zherry Antoinette P. Jacela

Program Head, Colegio de la Castellana, Philippines

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7203-2641>

Abstract:

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of Filipino preschool teachers working abroad. The study involved interviews with six conversation partners, and the resulting insights were organized into three overarching themes: Adaptability, Sociability and Coping Strategies. Despite initial challenges, the teachers demonstrated resilience in integrating into the local culture and curriculum, facing difficulties such as teaching special children, language barriers, and pandemic-related issues. They maintained positive relationships with colleagues regardless of nationality, emphasizing the significance of professional development, cultural understanding, adaptation to local norms, collaboration, cross-cultural communication, trust-building, language acquisition, and self-care in diverse educational settings.

Keywords: Filipino Preschool teachers, lived experiences, working abroad

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

For Filipino teachers striving for greener pastures, going abroad is a great opportunity to work, earn a living, provide for the family's needs, and see other places (Deguma et al., 2022). Experiences are quite important in an educator's daily life. Teachers go through life progressions, and each has its style of dealing with lived experiences. Inside the classroom and in human hearts, experienced instructors are fighting a hazardous battle as individuals. They are plagued by anxiety, disappointment, tension, a lack of self-confidence, feelings of incompleteness, dependency, and an inability to cope with their daily circumstances. (Lariosa et. al., 2022) While these experiences and challenges can defeat everyone, they can also catalyze enhancement in preparation for the promising development in the cognitive, spiritual, social, personal, and understanding of one's professional opportunities and trials (Bilbao, 2012).

This qualitative phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of Filipino preschool teachers working abroad through in-depth interviews, revealing three major themes—Adaptability, Sociability, and Coping Strategies—and eight sub-themes, including Pandemic Education, Cultural Diversity, and Self-Care. Teaching overseas offers academic and social growth, enhancing skills in communication, classroom management, and cross-cultural understanding (Serbes, 2017). However, challenges such as low salaries, unsafe work conditions, and the undervaluation of early childhood education persist (UNESCO, 2018). Despite these difficulties, Filipino teachers' resilience and adaptability enable them to navigate cultural adjustments, new educational systems, and diverse classroom environments effectively.

The researcher's interest lies in gaining insight into the lived experiences of participants who teach as preschool educators in Indonesia. As a preschool teacher herself, the researcher is motivated by the aspiration to elucidate and uncover the challenges preschool teachers confront and how they improve the quality of education as they teach young children. This study encompasses the periods preceding and following the global pandemic concerning their commitment to delivering quality education. Furthermore, the researcher will discuss the nuances of the preschool teachers' teaching and learning experiences. The researcher is keen to gain a better understanding of the coping strategies the preschool teachers employ in response to the struggles and challenges encountered while working abroad.

Current State of Knowledge

Early Childhood Education (ECE) supports children's learning up to age eight, emphasizing play-based development, but was significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping over 90% of children out of school (UNESCO, 2020). In Indonesia, ECE, known as Pendidikan Usia Dini (PAUD), follows a structured curriculum that aligns learning with children's developmental stages to ensure long-term growth. Meanwhile, Thailand's job market opened to foreign teachers in 2001, attracting many Filipino professionals, though most enter as tourists and must continually enhance their qualifications to remain competitive (Deguma, 2022). The pandemic further challenged educators, accelerating the shift to online learning (Spiteri, 2021). Research underscores ECE's role in shaping lifelong learning, with lasting social and economic benefits (OECD, 2019).

Teachers have adapted to online tools, enhancing their technological skills, teaching methods, and communication roles, while also providing psychological support to families during the pandemic (Yildiz, 2022). Early childhood educators play multifaceted roles, including fostering child development, monitoring learning progress, and bridging connections with parents (Van Laere et al., 2012). Their flexibility, especially in times of uncertainty, highlights their resilience. The innate human desire for recognition and appreciation drives teachers to embrace challenges and innovate (Ndungu, 2017). As key figures in early childhood education, preschool teachers are essential in curriculum implementation, child guidance, cultural inclusivity, and fostering independence (Ntumi, 2016).

Indonesia has embraced inclusive education (IE) to ensure that all children, including those with special needs, have equal learning opportunities (Atika & Ismiatun, 2020). While the constitution protects this right (Suhendri, 2020), challenges persist, including inadequate financial resources, infrastructure, and teacher preparedness in planning inclusive learning programs (Ayu et al., 2019; Mastuti, 2014; Subagya, 2012; Windarsih et al., 2017). Additionally, some parents are unaware of their children's special needs, and the high cost of IE presents further barriers. To address these issues, educators must expand their knowledge through extensive reading and adapt their teaching methods to meet preschool curriculum and pedagogical standards, particularly when working with students requiring additional support (Nachiappan et al., 2018).

Teachers working with special needs students often experience high levels of stress, which impacts their mental and physical health, overall quality of life, and the effectiveness of special education (Zhang, Bai, & Li, 2020). Emotional demands, role conflicts, and long working hours contribute to their exhaustion. Parental involvement plays a crucial role in supporting children's development, especially during challenging times, and is most effective when parents and teachers work together (Forbes et al., 2021; Hollingsworth & Buysse, 2009; Acar et al., 2021). Filipinos, known for their resilience in tough environments, embody adaptability and perseverance (Fallaria et al., 2018). A positive mindset provides significant mental, emotional, and physical benefits, improving teachers' well-being, stress management, and immune health (Sing, 2022). Research suggests that optimism enhances teachers' ability to problem-solve and adjust to new teaching environments, fostering a more fulfilling and effective teaching experience.

Globalization has expanded teaching opportunities, fostering cross-cultural experiences that require adaptability, goal setting, and the right mindset to succeed abroad (Uytico & Abadiano, 2020). Filipino educators working overseas, such as in Qatar and Singapore, face personal and professional challenges, including adapting to different school dynamics, teaching pedagogies, and multicultural environments (Reyes et al., 2020; Alicamen & Becamon, 2022). While they may experience homesickness, discrimination, and communication barriers, they develop resilience and adaptability to thrive (Carpio et al., 2018; Fallaria et al., 2018). Language differences further challenge effective communication, but strategies like slowing speech and simplifying vocabulary help overcome these issues (Frederiksen, 2014; Reyes et al., 2020). The demanding nature of teaching abroad underscores the need for strong support systems to help foreign educators navigate stress and cultural transitions (Catama et al., 2016). Despite these hardships, many Filipino teachers view their experiences as opportunities for professional growth, proving their competence and competing globally (Deguma et al., 2022).

Sociability plays a crucial role in helping Filipino teachers abroad adapt to new environments, allowing them to build relationships and navigate workplace dynamics effectively (Reyes et al., 2020). Filipino millennial teachers shared stories of survival, highlighting their goals, motivations, challenges, and coping strategies for thriving in foreign countries (Uytico, 2022). Their experiences, perceived as opportunities for growth, require adaptability, resilience, and goal-oriented attitudes to overcome professional and personal challenges (Modesto, 2020). Coping strategies such as sociability, adaptability, and strong personalities help them manage workplace and cultural difficulties, including interactions with learners, colleagues, and parents from diverse backgrounds (Reyes et al., 2020). Positive recognition from the host culture fosters motivation and pride in their profession, boosting enthusiasm and productivity (Sahito & Vaisanen, 2019; Arcillo, 2023). A phenomenological approach to studying their experiences provides valuable insights for future Filipino educators, preparing them for similar challenges in international school settings.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) provides a framework for understanding how preschool teachers working abroad adapt to new environments. The theory highlights the role of observational learning, modeling, and cognitive processes in shaping behavior. By observing local educators, teachers can learn effective classroom management techniques, teaching strategies, and cultural norms. A key concept in this theory is self-efficacy—an individual's belief in their ability to succeed. For preschool teachers, positive interactions with students and colleagues can boost their confidence, motivation, and overall performance, reinforcing their ability to navigate new educational settings successfully.

Social Learning Theory also explains how teachers adjust to cultural norms by observing and modeling the behaviors of those around them. This includes learning communication styles, teaching approaches, and coping strategies for challenges such as language barriers and cultural differences. Through self-regulation and adaptive learning, teachers can develop strategies to manage stress and overcome obstacles effectively. Ultimately, Bandura's theory helps us

understand how preschool teachers working abroad acquire new skills, refine their teaching methods, and successfully integrate into diverse cultural and educational environments.

Purpose Statement

The main purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the struggles of six (6) Filipino teachers in an ASEAN state relative to their commitment to delivering quality education. At this stage of the study, struggles were generally defined as conditions that Filipino teachers have to grapple with to ensure their students learn in an online, onsite, or hybrid learning modality while simultaneously dealing with the teaching environment, cultural diversity, and language barrier.

Central Question

What pressing struggles do Filipino teachers in Indonesia have to grapple with in relation to their personal commitment to deliver quality education?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the struggles they faced as a preschool teacher teaching internationally in terms of parent-teacher relationship, teacher-staff relationship and pandemic experience?
2. What are the coping strategies that made them overcome these struggles?
3. Where do they draw their inspiration to excel in their jobs despite the obstacles to teaching-learning caused by the pandemic?

Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design, locale of the study, conversation partners, inclusion and exclusion criteria, research interview protocol, data gathering procedure, rigors of findings, data explication procedure and research ethics protocol

Research Design

A qualitative research design was used to describe the struggles experienced by Filipino preschool teachers working abroad. The descriptive phenomenological research method using in-depth interviews was chosen to gather information on the subjective essence of each individual's experience. This phenomenological study ascertained particular phenomena or the appearance of things as lived experiences (Rodriguez & Smith, 2020). It is sought to understand particular phenomena by focusing on the experiences and perceptions of those who live them (Iversen et al., 2018).

Phenomenology was utilized in this study to capture the informants' lived experiences and reduce them to an elucidation with universal meaning. In this type of phenomenology, the author supersedes past experiences to understand a phenomenon extensively. Creswell (2015) describes phenomenology as research that requires a profound understanding of the human experiences common to certain groups of people.

Additionally, this approach is the most appropriate in describing the lived experiences of Filipino preschool teachers working abroad and how these teachers adapted and coped despite the struggles they encountered as they worked in relation to their commitment to delivering quality education. The goal and subject matter of this method are to understand what has been called "consciousness" or "lived experience," in doing so, phenomenology seeks to clarify and shed light on the very meaning of these words. Such human existence, which emphasizes the world, has been considered preferable given some contexts, aims, and findings of these investigations.

Conversation Partners

The conversation partners in this study were composed of six (6) Filipino preschool teachers teaching in Jakarta, Indonesia, during the school year 2022-2023, selected using purposive sampling. The conversation partners were selected through a qualitative purposive sampling strategy (Creswell & Plano, 2011). Purposive sampling is a strategy selected that gives information necessary for the needs of the study. It is characterized by the incorporation of specific criteria met by the participants at the moment of selection (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). The number was enough to gather the intended data since phenomenological studies require fewer than ten interviews (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

For the researcher to collect reliable and more in-depth responses, the conversation partners were purposefully selected based on their civil status, teaching licensure, years of stay in Indonesia, and teaching in a preschool. They were chosen considering their occupation as preschool teachers and years of stay in Jakarta, Indonesia, as the researchers believed their insights are constructive because they have experienced both living and working as a preschool teacher in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Inclusion Criteria

Conversation partners who were included in the study are six (6) single Filipino female preschool teachers who have been teaching in Jakarta, Indonesia, for five (5) years or more. They should be licensed teachers in the Philippines. Conversation partners who meet the inclusion criteria can participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

Participants who met exclusion criteria were disqualified to ensure research integrity and safety. Six Filipino preschool teachers in Jakarta, Indonesia, were selected and assigned pseudonyms (CP1–CP6) to maintain confidentiality. These single, licensed teachers had over five years of experience and shared insights into their professional journeys. CP1 (Reign) has taught in South Jakarta for 12 years and considers Indonesia her second home. CP2 (Lily) stayed for career and financial growth, teaching for five years. CP3 (Rea) has 20 years of experience and was familiar with Indonesia before becoming a teacher. CP4 (Leah) initially had no plans to work in Indonesia but embraced the opportunity and has taught for five years. CP5 (Rana) came to Indonesia to heal from heartbreak, secured a job through a friend's recommendation, and has taught for 11 years. CP6 (Maya) planned to stay for three years but extended her stay to 15 years, learning Bahasa along the way. The interviews highlighted their adaptation to a foreign country, language barriers, teaching struggles during and after the pandemic, and coping strategies.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study utilized a rigorous qualitative data analysis process to interpret the rich, text-based descriptions from interviews, aligning with phenomenological principles (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Recorded interviews were transcribed, read, and re-read while cross-referencing field notes to capture participants' emotions and ensure accuracy. Atlas.ti software was used for transcription, coding, and thematic analysis. An inductive approach allowed themes to emerge organically from the data without relying on pre-existing frameworks (Estrade et al., 2014). This process ensured a deep understanding of the lived experiences of Filipino preschool teachers in Jakarta, providing meaningful insights into their challenges and adaptations.

Research Interview Protocol

The study employed qualitative semi-structured interviews to gather data from six Filipino preschool teachers in Jakarta, Indonesia. This approach allowed participants to share their struggles and experiences naturally while ensuring accuracy through audio recordings and field notes. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a comfortable setting, lasting 30-40 minutes, with follow-up interviews to validate responses. A pre-survey identified eligible participants based on inclusion criteria, and a brief orientation outlined their rights, confidentiality, and voluntariness. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym (CP1–CP6) for privacy. The researcher-maintained consistency in questioning to streamline data analysis, using field notes and audio recorders to capture both verbal and non-verbal cues. After transcription, participants reviewed their responses for accuracy. The study aimed to explore the challenges these educators faced in delivering quality education while adapting to a foreign environment. The researcher expressed gratitude and ensured confidentiality before officially concluding the interviews.

Research Ethics Protocol

Throughout this study, the researcher must have a good relationship with the conversation partners and a professionally responsible role in the scholarly community. In this study, the researcher ensured that the conversation partners' identification never compromised their identity in school. This is an adherence to the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The reasonable privacy of the participants was guaranteed. In addition, according to Creswell (2013), the research community has also emphasized the importance of normative and undisputed rules as guidelines in research, with informed, voluntary consent being the hallmark of ethical conduct. However, there needs to be more research focusing on respondents' reasoning for choosing to participate or not in the study (Brevik, 2013). The researcher addressed the general ethical principles of respect for people and justice to ensure the ethical soundness of the study. The following are important ethical concerns and should be considered while conducting this qualitative research (Sanjiri et al., 2015).

Results and Discussion

This chapter describes the lived experiences of the six (6) Filipino preschool teachers teaching in Indonesia relative to the central question: "What pressing struggles do Filipino Teachers in Indonesia have to grapple with in relation to their personal commitment to deliver quality education?"

The study identified three main themes—Adaptability, Sociability, and Coping Strategies—derived from 185 codes and 103 relevant quotations. These themes were further categorized into eight sub-themes: Pandemic Education, Cultural Diversity, Special Education, Teaching Environment, Language Barrier, Motivation, Teaching and Learning Experiences, and Self-care. The findings highlight the lived experiences of Filipino preschool teachers in Jakarta

before, during, and after the pandemic, emphasizing their adaptability in overcoming challenges, sociability in navigating cultural and workplace dynamics, and coping strategies for maintaining well-being. These results align with Deguma et al. (2022), affirming that Filipino teachers view working abroad as both an opportunity for professional growth and a challenge requiring resilience and competence.

Table 1

General Cluster of Meaning

Cluster Grouping	General Cluster of Relevant Meaning	Central Ideas
Group1	I. Adaptation to Tech Tools II. Online Learning III. Teaching Methods I. Career Change II. Job Factors III. Cultural Awareness I. Challenges in teaching SPED students II. Teachers' Lack of training I. Communication difficulties II. Differences in Cross-cultural communication III. Challenges with delegation	Adaptability a. <i>Pandemic Education</i> b. <i>Cultural Diversity</i> c. <i>Special Education</i> d. <i>Language Barrier</i>
Group 2	I. Positive Relationship II. Passion I. Skills Development II. Teaching Styles III. Multi-modal Learnings I. Cultural Differences II. Challenging Situation	Sociability a. <i>Motivation</i> b. <i>Teaching and Learning</i> c. <i>Teaching Environment</i>
Group 3	I. Stress Management II. Family Support III. Interests and Hobbies	Coping Strategies a. <i>Self-care</i>

The discussions below focus on the themes, sub-themes, and general clusters of meaning, which have been carefully derived from the interview transcripts. These transcripts contain willful expressions, confessions, and revelations on the overarching question, "*What pressing struggles do Filipino Teachers in Indonesia have to grapple with in relation to their personal commitment to deliver quality education?*" of this study's six (6) conversational partners.

Theme 1: Adaptability

The conversation partners in this study recognize that being adaptive in a foreign country makes a big difference in adjusting to a new environment. A set of unique challenges and struggles often accompanies the adaptability of Filipino preschool teachers working abroad. These teachers exhibit remarkable resilience in navigating these difficulties while providing quality early childhood education. According to Reyes et al. (2020), adaptation is a prime factor in survival in a different environment. It is most useful when individuals find themselves in an unfamiliar setting that they have never encountered. The pandemic allowed teachers to embrace change and survive how to teach in a different classroom.

Pandemic Education. Pandemic education has been an unprecedented challenge for students, teachers, and educational systems worldwide. As the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the globe, schools and universities were forced to close their doors to prevent the spread of the virus, leading to a significant disruption in traditional learning methods. This sudden shift necessitated the rapid adoption of remote learning and various strategies to ensure educational continuity. The teachers began transitioning as virtual teachers, utilizing different technological tools, learning management systems, and other digital resources. In this study, pandemic education was used to describe the Filipino preschool teacher's class experience during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It could be teaching experiences using online, offline, or hybrid classes. This study's sub-theme of pandemic education springs up from the cluster of relevant meanings: *Adaptation to Tech Tools*, *Online Learning*, and *Teaching Methods*. These are common responses of the conversation partners (CP) who participated in the study, which largely contribute to their lived experiences as preschool teachers during the pandemic.

The following transcripts support this. The conversation partners explained, "I can say I adapted. And I survived. I didn't get COVID for one. I work in a regular school in an international Cambridge school before pandemic and now back to preschool teaching a small international during the pandemic." ["*I can say I adapted, and I survived. I didn't*

get COVID for one. I work in a regular school in an international Cambridge school before the pandemic and now back to preschool teaching in a small international school during the pandemic."] (**Reign**)

Filipino preschool teachers faced numerous challenges during the pandemic when transitioning to online classes. One of which was teaching online. The conversation partners shared how they struggled with the new technology given to them. However, teachers with internet access and devices often need help with technical issues such as internet outages, slow connectivity, or difficulties with online teaching platforms.

"Yeah. So, I'd like to start with during the pandemic, because that one is the toughest moment. Or, like, breaking point sa pagtuturo sa preschool, so like naging transition from in person or like face to face and then again online. So that one for me ah during that time is very hard. Yeah, so like kailangan mo mag isip ng strategies, mag aral ng online. Yung mga bagong sa zoom, pagawa ng powerpoint presentations para sa learning materials and resources for the kids." ["I'd like to start with the pandemic because that one is the toughest moment. Or, like, breaking point sa pagtuturo sa preschool, so like naging transition from in person or like face to face and then again online. So that one for me ah during that time is very hard. Yeah, so like kailangan mo mag isip ng strategies, mag aral ng online. Yung mga bagong sa zoom, pagawa ng PowerPoint presentations para sa learning materials and resources for the kids..." I want to start with the pandemic because that one is the toughest moment. Or, like, a breaking point in preschool teaching, like the transition from in-person or face-to-face and then again online. So that one for me ah during that time is very hard. Yeah, so, like, you have to think of strategies and study online. Those who are new to Zoom make PowerPoint presentations for learning materials and resources for the kids)."] (**Lily**)

"Online was a struggle because it was my first time doing online classes. Aside from that, the kids we all know have a small attention span. So, it is very challenging because, occasionally, you need to call them out. You must ensure that you have fun lessons even though they are online." ["Online was a struggle because it was my first time doing online classes. Aside from that, the kids we all know have a small attention span. So, it is very challenging because, occasionally, you need to call them out. You need to make sure that you have fun lessons even though they are online."] (**Leah**)

"Many of us are struggling, especially teachers, how to cope on this technology, you know, first and foremost, you have to be knowledgeable on how to manage all this, zoom all the downloading OK uploading. The materials and whatever platforms you're going to use, just like you know, if you don't have any idea, you have to really learn and you have to train, you have to be trained, and then we have very. very short period only of information when we are going to have our online classes." ["Many of us are struggling, especially teachers, how to cope with this technology, you know, you have to be knowledgeable about how to manage all this, zoom all the downloading and uploading. The materials and whatever platforms you're going to use, like you know, if you don't have any idea, you have to really learn, and you have to train, you have to be trained, and then we have a very short period of information when we are going to have our online classes."] (**Maya**)

The statements of Lily, Leah, and Maya were agreed upon by Yildiz (2022), stating that teachers have perceived online tools as instrumental in changing teachers' technological skills, methods, and techniques they implement as part of their roles. Teachers also perceived that their communication role has changed due to the pandemic. Teachers have monitored the impact of the pandemic on families and provided psychological support.

Some conversation partners shared how they adapted to online teaching methods. Teaching preschoolers online requires a significant adjustment in instructional strategies. Preschool education is highly interactive and relies heavily on physical activities and face-to-face interactions. Teachers had to find creative ways to engage their young students through digital platforms, which was challenging and time-consuming. Rea shared her thoughts on how they used online technological tools and online educational resources amidst the pandemic to enhance her teaching abilities.

"Before I don't use as many laptops or desktops, but because there's so many, I get from there now. I'm using that now because before, if you don't have the storybook, then fine don't have the storybook. But now I'm using Epic. It's like a library where I can use a lot. Now, I'm using integrated a lot of songs, since many songs were created during the pandemic. That can be used for learning, so I think the one that I can say is that the one that we were using during the pandemic, I have used some of them as well in class." ["Before, I don't use as much laptops or desktops, but because there are so many resources, I get from there now. I'm using that now because before, if you don't have the storybook, then fine, you don't have the storybook, but now I'm using Epic. It's like a library where I can use a lot of stories. Now, I have integrated a lot of songs since many songs were created during the pandemic that can be used for learning. I can say that the one that we were using during the pandemic, I have used some of them as well in class."] (**Rea**)

Van Laere et al. (2012) reported that teachers in early childhood education have multifaceted roles, such as supporting the child's whole development, monitoring children's development and learning, and creating a connection between parents and preschool. This study established that preschool teachers are flexible, especially during times of uncertainty, such as the pandemic. Rana further shared that;

"The key to very effective teaching experience for the children and yourself is really a relationship, so. If the pandemic hit, that is the one that really stole from the students and the teachers, right? So, it pushed me to be more creative and establish relationships even though you just see each other on screen. So, in a way, it's a blessing also because I enjoy performing in front of the class during online, and then how are you going to teach a concept or a lesson that even household members of the family will be involved. If there is really a blessing even though it was hard because you had to make videos and everything." [*The key to a very effective teaching experience for the children and for yourself is really relationship, so, when the pandemic hit, that's the one that really stole from the students and the teachers, right? So, it pushed me to my ability to be more creative in how to establish relationships even though you see each other on screen. So, in a way, it's a blessing also because I enjoy performing in front of the class online, and then, how are you going to teach a concept or a lesson that even household members of the family will be involved in? If there's really a blessing even though, like, it was really hard because you had to make videos and everything.*] (**Rana**).

The evidence is clear that parents' involvement in children's development and learning, particularly in difficult times, could support children's healthy development and education (Forbes et al., 2021; Hollingsworth & Buysse, 2009). This support indeed becomes more effective when teachers and parents are allies in supporting children's development and learning (Acar et al., 2021). These statements were affirmed by Fallaria et al. (2018) as they state that Filipinos are known for having an incredibly tough environment; therefore, they constantly demonstrate the value of resilience.

Cultural Diversity. According to Ntumi's (2016) research study, preschool teachers, as key players in young children's education, have a crucial role to play in early childhood curriculum implementation. This may include child guidance and discipline, respecting cultural diversity, adopting the appropriate teaching and learning methods, and encouraging self-dependence. The cluster of relevant meanings considered are *Career Change*, *Job Factors*, and *Cultural Awareness*.

The following transcripts are related to cultural diversity and how they adapted to their environment. Teaching as a Filipino preschool teacher in Indonesia requires cultural awareness and sensitivity to ensure effective communication, respectful interactions, and a positive learning environment. Reign, Leah, and Rana shared their first teaching experiences and how they easily adapted to Indonesia's culture and people,

"Indonesia has taught me a lot of things, but as a teacher and as a teacher for more than a decade, I think I've learned to adapt (laugh). I've learned to adapt myself. You cannot, You can. I mean, you cannot always please everyone. So, I've learned to just do my best. And you know, you take the good and the bad. And always remember to be grateful. Yeah, especially after the pandemic, you realize. The fact that you have worked, the fact that you can give more to your family back home in the Philippines, you can live a more comfortable life. It has taught me to be grateful and count my blessings and small things. And then also I think most importantly is to love myself more, you cannot give what you don't" [*Indonesia has taught me a lot of things; as a teacher for more than a decade, I think I've learned to adapt (laugh). I've learned to adapt myself. You cannot, You can. I mean, you cannot always please everyone. So, I've learned to just do my best. You know, you take the good and the bad and always remember to be grateful. Yeah, especially after the pandemic, you realize the fact that you can give more to your family back home in the Philippines, and you can live a more comfortable life. It has taught me to be grateful and count my blessings and small things.*] (**Reign**)

"My first teaching experience in Indonesia was a struggle because I don't know anybody. I have this culture shock because it was my first time teaching in a Montessori school. They have different curriculum and then and my Co teachers as well. But after that it was it was good. It was OK. It was smooth." [*My first teaching experience in Indonesia was a struggle because I didn't know anybody. I had this culture shock because it was my first time teaching in a Montessori school. They had a different curriculum, and then my co-teachers, but it was good after that. It was OK. It was smooth.*] (**Leah**)

"My first year it was in a Montessori School, so the school was established for like a long time ago. So, it's like an old. So, people there, they know each other and my local assistant teachers like what I've said. They're really very supportive and very respectful. My first year of experience was really nice. That's why maybe it led me to come up to a decision to stay in Indonesia." [*My first year was in a Montessori School, so the school was established for like a long time ago. People there know each other, and my local assistant teachers they're really very supportive and very respectful. My first year of experience was really nice; that's why maybe it led me to come up with a decision to stay in Indonesia. People are nicer. They like to learn from the expats, and they team teach all the time. So far, from my three (3) schools, all my co-teachers and assistant teachers, they're really nice to me. They're very good. It's so nice to work with them, it's so easy to get along well, and they're very supportive of the benchmarks and lesson plans. All the things that you have set for the class.*] (**Rana**)

According to the remote educator of northern territory Russell et al. (2017), cultural competence is understanding and respecting values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that differ across cultures and considering and responding appropriately to these differences. One way to develop cultural competency is to form a relationship with adults and

children within the community. Rea and Maya shared their thoughts on how one should work hard and believe in oneself,

"So, whatever sits in front of you and it's ready for you, maybe nakakatakot, but I know that you know that it's good for you. Go for it. Wag yung pra akong di ako sure, di ako sure. No, if alam mong nakakabuti saiyo, grab it! And then kung medyo mahirap, that's part of it. Wala namang magandang buhay or magandang bagay na you'll just get na ganun kadali lang. It's not supposed to be easy. Something good for you is supposed to be hard. That's what I think. You have to work hard." [*So, whatever sits in front of you and it's ready for you, maybe it's scary, but I know that you know that it's good for you. Go for it. Don't say that I'm not sure. I'm not sure. No, if you know it's good for you, grab it! And then, if it's a bit difficult, that's part of it. There is no good life or good things that you'll just get that easily. It's not supposed to be easy. Something good for you is supposed to be hard. That's what I think. You have to work hard.*"] **(Rea)**

"There is an invitation for me, and that it's it doesn't come to my mind that I really wanted to go for abroad, but then it just a curiosity how will be the teaching or the curriculum is being served here for the students. It was good. And until now, I'm still enjoying teaching preschool." [*There is an invitation for me to teach, and it didn't come to my mind that I really wanted to teach abroad, but then just curiosity about how I will be teaching or what kind of curriculum is being served here for the students. It was good. And until now, I'm still enjoying teaching preschool.*"] **(Maya)**

Indonesia is a culturally diverse country with numerous ethnic groups and traditions. Filipino teachers might need to adapt to a different cultural context, teaching styles, and learning preferences. Understanding and respecting these cultural differences can create a positive learning environment. Moran (2021) stated that as new teachers abroad, one should expect culture shock when setting up in a new country. But adapting to the classroom can be a whole new story. Every culture has unspoken rules and little cues that determine normal interactions between students and teachers.

Special Education. Challenges encountered daily in the most critical areas of life can greatly impact men's mental health. It is tough if those challenges are never resolved and still cause a strong reaction and stress. Surviving a teaching job in a foreign country is an achievement considering that language is a barrier, culture is different, and the impression of being a foreign teacher makes a mark (Deguma et al., 2022).

According to the study conducted by Atika and Ismiatun (2020), influenced by the global trend, Indonesia has begun to advocate inclusive education. Inclusive education (IE) fulfills the right to education for all people, including children with special needs. It is a system of providing education that provides opportunities for all students who have disabilities and have the potential for intelligence and unique talents to attend education or learn in an educational environment with students in general. In Indonesia, the constitution guarantees and protects the right to education for children with special needs (Suhendri, 2020).

Many obstacles came from schools and teachers to implement inclusive education in ECE programs in Indonesia. One of them is low readiness, which is affected by financial and infrastructure factors. The teachers' readiness for planning learning program activities for IE still needs to be improved. The need for more government support, facilities, and infrastructure is needed. Furthermore, other obstacles are that parents need to realize that their children have deficiencies, a cost for IE, and teachers' difficulties in planning learning programs for inclusive children (Ayu et al., 2019).

This study's sub-theme of Special Education springs from the cluster of relevant meanings: challenges in teaching special education students and teachers' lack of training. In this study, the Reign and Maya explained,

"I'm confident to say that I can handle the parents, but there would always be one or two challenging parents in my class and mostly would be, surprisingly for those parents who have kids with special needs, especially if they're in denial, you know, or they have certain expectations you don't meet. So, I think that would be most challenging for me, and as a SPED teacher, I really need to, you know, establish that rapport, which I think would normally take time." [*I'm confident to say that I can handle the parents, but there would always be one or two challenging parent or parents in my class and mostly would be, surprisingly for those parents who have kids with special needs, especially if they're in denial, you know, or they have certain expectations you don't meet. So, I think that would be most challenging for me, and as a teacher, I really need to, you know, establish that rapport, which I could really normally take time.*"] **(Reign)**

"Another struggle that I have in my class was handling with the special children's needs. Because if they are being put to the normal school, I mean to the regular classes, the students who have the special needs, it's actually they have their own, they're supposed to have the intervention, but if you are a teacher who is not trained enough to handle them, it's also a struggle and it can disturb your class and it can also ahhh disrupt the attention of the rest of the kids. Yes, the dynamics of that class, and likewise the needs of the of those children. It could not be addressed really for them because there's no, no, you don't you are not trained enough to handle them, so that's another struggle that I have. Last time because I have 3. I have 3, low muscle tone ahhh child, speech delayed and speech

delayed, could not really talk and it's difficult for him to give food and the other one is really ADHD, very, very, very active ADHD. So, three of them in one class. Oh my gosh, it's chaos. And there's only one shadow teacher for the hyper one for the ADHD. The parents also doesn't want to accept when the that their child has a problem." [*"Another struggle that I had in my class was handling special children's needs. Because if they are being put to the normal school, I mean to the regular classes, the students who have the special needs, it's actually they have their own, they're supposed to have the intervention, but if you are a teacher who is not trained enough to handle them, it's also a struggle, and it can disturb your class, and it can also disrupt the attention of the rest of the kids. Yes, the dynamics of that class, and likewise the needs of those children. It could not be addressed really for them because there's no, no, you don't; you are not trained enough to handle them, so that's another struggle that I have. Last time because I have 3. I have a low muscle tone child, speech delayed, could not really talk, and it's difficult for him to give food, and the other one is really ADHD, very, very, very active ADHD. So, three of them were in one class. Oh my gosh, it's chaos. And there's only one shadow teacher for the hyper one for ADHD. The parents also don't want to accept when their child has a problem."*] (Maya)

These responses of the conversation partners prove that Filipino preschool teachers are accustomed to a different education system and teaching approach in their home country. According to Nachiappan et al. (2018), as a way to overcome the problem of teachers in teaching and learning, practical teachers must have vast knowledge through extensive reading in order to implement the various activities and be more enjoyable. Adapting their teaching methods to align with the preschool's curriculum and pedagogical standards could be challenging, especially when the preschool accepts students with additional needs. In addition, the study by Zhang, Bai, & Li (2020), research done in the past, also found that people who work with special needs students are stressed at work. Their mental and physical health are linked together, which affects the individual's quality of life and the quality of special education. Role conflicts, emotional demands, and working hours could greatly impact the emotional exhaustion of teachers who work with special needs students.

Language Barrier. In this study, one factor preschool teachers have struggled with is the language barrier. Language barriers refer to how the respondents faced and adjusted to surpass such challenges. Communication is vital to a positive and lively workplace; it enables people to understand each other and promotes adeptness. When such barriers are present in one communication, it hinders positive communication and may promote misunderstanding of each other (Reyes, 2020). The conversation partners shared their experiences on how they struggled during their first years teaching preschool in Indonesia.

The sub-theme of Language Barrier in this study springs up from the cluster of relevant meanings: *communication difficulties, differences in cross-cultural communication, and challenges with delegation*. Reign, Lily, and Maya talked about their struggles when communicating with their co-teachers on how to delegate tasks or work to be done,

"It's challenging for me because, in terms of communication, when you're relaying certain information, I think the message doesn't come across properly. So, I think basically communication problems and uuhm yeah, language barriers because some can have limited English, so they execute some given aah sometimes they give execute they can execute aah verbal instructions differently. So, you have always had to reiterate that you always have to make sure you present a visual sample to ensure that your expectations will be met, but there are small issues. There are small conflicts, I should say, between yeah, I think that's cultural differences. Sometimes, how you say things, is can being taken differently, so you have to like most of them, you have to speak gently or you have to modify or simplify certain instructions for them to get it right. But yeah, the manner of how you say things and yeah, giving certain instructions would have to be simplified and polite in a way (soft laugh)." [*"It's challenging for me in the sense that in terms of communication when you're relaying certain information, I think the message doesn't come across properly. So, I think it is basically communication problems. Yeah, language barriers because some can have limited English, so they execute some verbal instructions differently. So, you have always had to reiterate, you always have to make sure you present a visual sample to make sure that your expectations will be met, but yeah, these are small issues. There are small conflicts, I should say, between yeah, I think that's cultural differences. Sometimes, how you say things can be taken differently, so you have to like most of them; you have to speak gently, or you have to modify or simplify certain instructions for them to get it right. But yeah, the manner of how you say things and yeah, giving certain instructions would have to be simplified and polite in a way (soft laugh)."*] (Reign)

"So at first nung first term, second term, so talagang mahirap especially when it comes to language barrier. So, like, I really have to adapt. I really have to learn their languages and also para makapag reach out sa mga bata or mas maintindihan sila lalo (to reach out to children or understand them better) so yeah, number one is the language barrier and at the same time of course yung kailangan matutunan yung mga culture, traditions nila, yun so yun when it comes to teaching strategies of course dail preschool you really have to learn more or like na kailangan mo mag research or mag hanap ng mga different teaching strategies na pwede mong iapply sa mga bata dahil iba din ang mga learning capabilities at learning styles ng mga bata, so yeah, number one is the language barrier and at the same time of course what is needed learn their cultures, traditions, that's why when it comes to teaching strategies of course in preschool you really have to learn more or like you need to research or find different teaching strategies that you can apply to children because children's learning capabilities and learning styles are also different.) [*I have*

to learn their languages and also to reach out to children or understand them better (to reach out to children or understand them better); so yeah, number one is the language barrier and at the same time, of course, what is needed learn their cultures, traditions, that's why when it comes to teaching strategies of course in preschool you have to learn more or like you need to research or find different teaching strategies that you can apply to children because children's learning capabilities and learning styles are also different."] (Lily)

"It's our language barrier, especially when you give instructions, they could not be able to, you know, could they could not work properly or they they could, you cannot relate your ideas and everything, and the result will be also different and it's a struggle so that you really have to give them the instructions very well before you will be satisfied of the result of their work, especially with your assistant teachers inside the class or your helpers." ["It's our language barrier, especially when you give instructions, they could not be able to, you know, could they could not work properly or they could, you cannot relate your ideas and everything, and the result will also be different, and it's a struggle so that you have to give them the instructions very well before you are satisfied with the result of their work, especially with your assistant teachers inside the class or your helpers."] (Maya)

These statements affirmed by Reyes et al.'s (2020) study of different accents and vocabularies from different places hinder them from communicating with them. Simply asking them to repeat and say slowly did the trick. One must still try to surpass a challenge, which is exactly what they did. Simply asking their co-worker to repeat what they say made it easier for them to convey to their co-workers that their manner of speaking is too fast for them to understand and to their co-workers who do not have English as their first language, cutting down words that they are familiar with is what worked with them. According to Frederiksen (2014), some challenges, including the language barrier, were revealed in her study on Filipino teacher migration.

Theme 2: Sociability

The sociability of Filipino preschool teachers working abroad is a valuable asset that enables them to build relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and the community in their host countries. However, along with sociability, they often encounter specific challenges and struggles related to their experiences. In the study conducted by Reyes et al. (2020), they defined sociability as the ability of one person to socialize with others in their workplace, school, and community. Everyone has a distinct way and reason for socializing with others. Being able to socialize is advantageous for someone who is introduced to a new setting or environment. The ability to swiftly socialize allows one to gain new friends and adapt when introduced to a new environment or new ways of life.

Motivation. Human nature's desire to be recognized and appreciated for their work performance compels them to initiate action to new challenges and to be innovative substantially (Ndungu, 2017). Sahito and Vaisanen (2019) added that this perception encourages Filipino educators to identify themselves positively and effectively increases their enthusiasm to do more. Moreover, respect gained from host culture individuals inspires, motivates, and makes them feel proud about their profession. The conversation partners shared where they draw their motivation as preschool teachers. The sub-theme of motivation emerges from the cluster of relevant meanings, which are *positive relationship* and passion. Reign, Rea, Rana, and Maya shared where they get their motivation and what draws them to stay as early childhood educators despite the struggles they faced,

"What motivates me? It's my purpose. Which is to teach, and I love what I'm doing. So yeah, and I imagine doing this, you know, till I get old teaching kids or maybe training teachers later on, which is my dream hopefully and hopefully in the in the near future, but to really, it's very challenging and it's nice also to to make a difference and hopefully leaving this world a better place, you know? I truly believe in that, and whatever I'm doing now, I hope to carry with me when I fly back home to the Philippines. It's Philippines will always be an option, but whatever gives me purpose and meaning in life makes me happy at the end of the day." ["What motivates me? It's my purpose. Which is to teach, and I love what I'm doing. So yeah, and I imagine doing this, you know, till I get old teaching kids or maybe training teachers later on, which is my dream hopefully and hopefully in the near future, but to really, it's very challenging, and it's nice also to make a difference and hopefully leaving this world a better place, you know? I truly believe in that, and whatever I'm doing now, I hope to carry with me when I fly back home to the Philippines. It's the Philippines will always be an option, but whatever gives me purpose and meaning in life makes me happy at the end of the day"] (Reign)

Teachers' pedagogical expertise was developed to be keen to share their insights if given a chance in the Philippines. From the accounts of Serin (2017), educators with international experience are more motivated to learn about other cultures and have a more favorable yet critical perspective toward their homeland. They acknowledge that the foreign curriculum has the potential to generate new learning resources and knowledge. By obtaining new ideas for curricular improvement, teachers working overseas may play a part in education and learning in their home countries. At a certain time, they may implement the relevant aspects of the international curriculum in their own countries (Alcamen, 2022).

"Uhhh.. I will not say I hope that I do excel, but for (laughing) my motivation would be thinking about uhhh, of course, I also want my children to be able to achieve something or to have learned. Learned in class not just to learn,

but to embrace what they've learned. To enjoy learning, that's my motivation, see them happy and enjoying what they're doing, that's another motivation." [*"Uhhh... I will not say... I hope that I do excel, but for (laughing) my motivation would be thinking about, uhhh, of course, I also want my children to be able to achieve something or to have learned. Learned in class not just to learn but to embrace what they've learned. To enjoy learning, that's my motivation; see them happy and enjoying what they're doing, that's another motivation."*] **(Rea)**

"I fell in love. With the early childhood education, because I want to get to know more what's in the mind of the child, like how they develop, I'm really amazed how learning happens inside the classroom and outside the classroom because their brain is really different from how the people around them works. That's why I'm in preschool." [*"I fell in love with early childhood education because I want to get to know more about what's in the mind of the child, like how they develop. I'm really amazed at how learning happens inside the classroom and outside the classroom because their brain is really different from how the people around them work. That's why I'm in preschool."*] **(Rana)**

"Ohh, I draw my inspiration right now with the kids like I see the struggle of parents. Some of the parents that only the kids, they are pressing, they're very they're pressuring their kids actually to many activities which is the kids or the where their child actually it's confusing because most of them they are enrolled in many tuitions like you know, after school." [*"Ohh, I draw my inspiration right now with the kids like I see the struggle of parents. Some of the parents that only the kids, they are they're pressuring their kids actually too many activities which are the kids or the where their child actually it's confusing because most of them they are enrolled in many tuitions like you know, after school."*] **(Maya)**

On the other hand, Leah shared that she draws inspiration from people in her community, such as her colleagues and friends."

"My inspiration was my mentors because I know they are already successful in their career as well and I'm looking forward to having those success that they have." [*"My inspiration were my mentors because I know they are already successful in their career as well, and I'm looking forward to having those successes that they have."*] **(Leah)**

Teaching and Learning. In the study conducted by Alicamen and Becamon (2022), they believed that by promoting interconnectivity and cross-cultural experiences, opportunities for teaching and learning have increased. Working and relocating abroad is a big decision to make. As a new migrant, it can be challenging because one is now living in a nation that is vastly different from his or her own. One of the most challenging aspects of relocating abroad is figuring out how to seamlessly integrate into one's host country's culture, traditions, environment, language, and customs, especially if it is a first-time experience in a different country. Filipino teachers teach overseas, gain insights and improve teaching strategies, placing them in an advantageous corner.

Moreover, their foreign exposure makes them seem more creative and innovative in their respective classes. Altun's (2015) study reiterated that the teachers acquaint themselves with a diverse range of curricula, communicate with other professionals, and in due course, become professionally developed. These studies corroborated the experiences of the conversation partners. Sub-themes of teaching and learning spring up from the cluster of relevant meanings: *skills development, teaching styles, and multi-modal learning*. Leah shared her thoughts that, as teachers, one should never stop learning;

"1st is to gain more experience in teaching preschool, most especially to encounter new or diversity of kids from local to international learning. Yes, still learning up until now. I learned that we do have different personality. We do have different culture." [*"First is to gain more experience in teaching preschool, most especially to encounter new or diverse kids from local to international learning. I'm still learning up until now. I learned that we do have different personalities. We do have a different culture."*] **(Leah)**

As a preschool teacher, Rana and Maya shared their teaching strategies and believed that interactive and multi-modal learnings are effective ways to teach the children so they can learn in a fun way.

"My school is creative curriculum. So, when I started here, even in my previous school actually. So early childhood education nowadays is not more on boards and. They really created curriculum is learning by doing so. Let's say you're gonna and to do something, make sure that you are tapping all the learning styles of the children like the auditory learners, visual learners. So, you have to provide lots of activities wherein you will observe at the same time they will. It will become interactive for everybody." [*"My school has a creative curriculum. When I started here, even in my previous school. So, early childhood education nowadays is not more on boards. The curriculum is learning by doing, so let's say you're gonna and to do something; make sure that you are tapping all the learning styles of the children, like the auditory learners and visual learners. So, you have to provide lots of activities wherein you will observe at the same time they will. It will become interactive for everybody."*] **(Rana)**

"Sometimes my teaching strategies or teaching struggle or my strategies I, put all together all my experiences, traditional and hands-on activities, so it's actually, it depends on your students ahhh achievement or their capacity." [*"Sometimes my teaching strategies, I put all together all my experiences, traditional and hands-on activities, so it's actually, it depends on your students' achievement or their capacity"*]. **(Maya)**

Rana and Maya added that in order for a teacher to grow, they need to attend different workshops and they need to be teachable,

"Now I discovered that Indonesia's early childhood education, I think in Indonesia is more progressive. Because they never stop discovering, inviting foreigners, and resource speakers. When I had my experience in one school, they even invited a Russian speaker who taught us about Vygotsky. Key learning module and then this school really very generous in giving workshops, trainings to teachers they certified kinder music, hula education, a lot more...Regio Emilia like they never stop discovering. Even up to this time. Even up to this time, like my school is thriving to really do creative curriculum." [*"Now I discovered that Indonesia's early childhood education, I think in Indonesia is more progressive. Because they never stop discovering, inviting foreigners, and resource speakers. When I had my experience in one school, they even invited a Russian speaker who taught us about Vygotsky. Key learning module, and then this school is really very generous in giving workshops, training to teachers they certified kinder music, hula education, a lot more. Regio Emilia, like they never stop discovering. Even up to this time, like my school is thriving to really do creative curriculum."*] (**Rana**)

"Being teachable, being listener also a good listener, and of course, equipping yourself updating. It's like, you know, the computer that you have to upgrade, otherwise you will be left behind. So I think you have to be teachable and everything." [*"Being teachable, being a good listener, and of course, equipping yourself, updating. It's like, you know, the computer that you have to upgrade; otherwise, you will be left behind. So, I think you have to be teachable in everything."*] (**Maya**)

These experiences support the study by Altun (2015), which states that teachers are motivated to experience supportive working environments and leaders. While overseas, teachers participate in workshops and improve teaching strategies provided by their administrators. They can also work with local teachers and gain new skills because of their encounters. This is also supported by Shiveley and Misco (2015), who states that being employed in a foreign country has both personal advantages and pitfalls. Working overseas increases teachers' transnational awareness of the value of education. When teachers start in a new environment, they become more adaptive and reflective of their teaching methods and eliminate their dogmatic thought. Hence, they will use their concepts to improve international teaching methodologies.

Teaching Environment. Filipino preschool teachers in Indonesia could experience a range of teaching environments, depending on the specific school or institution they work for. The sub-theme of the teaching environment in this study springs up from the cluster of relevant meanings, which are *cultural differences* and *challenging situations*.

Filipino preschool teachers working in Indonesia may encounter various cultural differences and challenging situations due to the distinct cultural, social, and educational contexts. Lily, Rea, Leah, and Rana shared their innermost thoughts on how they experienced struggles in their teaching environment,

"Yes, I have my I have my experience before, like. Yeah. So, like nahahirapan ako before na hawakan sila. Kase in the Philippines, we all know that one teacher, one man show man sa Pilipinas. So here like may AT, ma CoT. So yeah, that's the challenge for me because since I'm nung una bago pa ako dito tapos medyo bata pa ako, so, medyo nahirapan akong hawakan sila dahil sa age gap nami, mas ahead sila mas nauna sila dito, so nagging challenge yun sa akin kung paano ko sila mapasunod, ma handle ng maayos." [*"So, like, I had a hard time handling them before. Because we all know that one teacher is a one-man show in the Philippines, so here they have AT and CoT. So yeah, that's the challenge for me because since I'm new here at first and then I'm still quite young, so, it was a bit difficult for me to handle them because of our age gap; they're more ahead of me, more seasoned, so that became a challenge to me on how they will follow my lead properly."*] (**Lily**)

The statement of Lily is similar to the study conducted by Alicamen and Becamon (2022), wherein teachers disclosed that adjustment in teaching pedagogy for multicultural settings is necessitated since the preschool curriculum in Singapore is contrary to the academic-focused curriculum in schools that they have experienced in the Philippines.

"Struggles would probably be in the difference of beliefs in teaching strategies that's one. If you meet a person, I've had a parent who was also an educator in a different country, it's not an Asian country and of course, they are a lot of, she's more, they're more focused on play, socialization, ahhh not more to have to learn to write, I have to learn how to trace, I have to learn how to read. It's not like that. So that's what I want to know that maybe I have encountered, but it's not. It wasn't like they would disrespect you, but they would probably, you were questioning like what? You know, why are you asking them to do that? They're not supposed to do that yet. You know, so, some people are also in not all in the education field, but maybe in the field of maybe a pediatrician or something. They would have some questions like that. But you know I think that along the way, if you are able to prove that you know what we're doing right now is quite effective. So, in the long run, they won't be questioning anymore." [*"Struggles would probably be in the difference of beliefs in teaching strategies; that's one. If you meet a person, I've had a parent who was also an educator in a different country, it's not an Asian country, and of course, they are a lot of, she's more, they're more focused on play, socialization, not more to have to learn to write, I have to learn how to trace, I have to learn how to read. It's not like that. It wasn't like they would disrespect you, but they would probably,*

questioning like what? You know, why are you asking them to do that? They're not supposed to do that yet. You know, so, there are some people who are also not in the education field, but maybe in the field of maybe a pediatrician or something. They would have some questions like that. But you know, I think that along the way, if you are able to prove that you know what we're doing right now is quite effective. So, in the long run, they will not question anymore."] **(Rea)**

"For my first year in teaching, my parent-teacher relationship was a struggle because I didn't know their personality because, again, this is an International School. So, they do have different personalities, but I managed to be kind to them. We know the differences and diversity of each other's culture." ["For my first year in teaching, my parent-teacher relationship was a struggle because I didn't know their personality. So, the children have different personalities, but I managed to be kind to them. We know the difference and diversity of each other's cultures."] **(Leah)**

"Parents who are very particular, like when I was in a lower level like nursery level, they want their children to really finish the water bottle. I mean finish drinking and allergy. Sometimes I gave this child. I didn't know that food sharing had the mushroom in the pansit bihun. So, I gave and then when the child went home, of course, the child had an allergy attack, so the parents just called me, and I was apologetic. So, I think you just have to be bold enough and confident in everything you do. Otherwise, if you get scared, of course, I was scared, but. That's the being the leader of the class. I have to take responsibility. So, I really took the responsibility. So, I said even I was not the one who gave the food. I just said sorry. I gave the food, you know. Being a lead teacher is very important to understand that you have this big responsibility that at the end of the day, whatever they do, you'll always be the one to handle that." ["Parents who are very particular, like when I was in a lower level like nursery level, they want their children to really finish the water bottle. I mean, finish drinking and allergy. Sometimes, I gave the child I didn't know that food sharing had mushrooms in the noodles. So, I gave, and then when the child went home, of course, the child had an allergy attack, so the parents called me, and I was really apologetic. So, I think you just have to be bold enough and confident in everything you do. Otherwise, if you get scared, of course, I was scared, but. That's being the leader of the class. I have to take responsibility. So, I took the responsibility. So, I said, even though I was not the one who gave the food. I just said sorry. I gave the food, you know. Being a lead teacher is really very important to understand that you have this big responsibility that at the end of the day, whatever they do, you'll always be the one to handle that."] **(Rana)**

These statements corroborated with the study of Modesto (2020); it was apparent that Filipino teachers in foreign countries perceived their experiences as growth, an opportunity, and a challenge. The study of Reyes et al. (2020) suggested coping strategies, such as sociability, personality, and adaptability, which Filipino teachers must utilize for managing the problems of the employment world, including problems with the learners along with the issues of co-workers and the parents of children of various nationalities.

Theme 3: Coping Strategy

Filipino preschool teachers' coping strategies in Indonesia likely involve adapting to the local culture, addressing language barriers, and navigating differences in teaching practices. It is often dynamic and adaptive, allowing preschool teachers to navigate the complex landscape of working in a foreign country while maintaining their well-being and commitment to their profession.

According to Moran (2021), Cultural and social differences can make teaching abroad in a new country challenging. These studies supported the experiences of the conversation partners. Sub-themes of teaching and learning spring up from the cluster of relevant meaning, which is *self-care*. Filipino preschool teachers teaching in Indonesia use various coping strategies to navigate the challenges and adjustments associated with working in Indonesia. All six (6) conversation partners shared their experiences and various strategies on how they cope and care for themselves by saying,

"My coping strategies, ahhh, even before the pandemic, right? Even before the pandemic, during a pandemic. As a teacher, honestly, I'm very routine, so when I get stressed I would, I would stop. I drop everything, I need to breathe air. I need to see something green. I need to walk outside. I need to talk to a few chosen friends. I need to meditate and pray. I think basically that's my coping mechanism maybe with work or personal because in the job that we have, teaching is a service work, so it always seems that your cup is full. So, what I've learned is there are times that me, especially me, if you're very passionate with what you do, you don't know when you're tired. It's like you just feel like you're getting you. You feel like your body is numb, and then at the end of the day you just sleep, you forget to wash up, forget about yourself. So when those times happen, those times come. I know I need to pause and then empty my cup. Usually I go travel, yeah. I like traveling alone or in small groups, or I fly back home to the Philippines and see and go to the beach. Only that go to something, go back to nature. More of like that or I eat. If it's not possible because of the schedule. I just eat or drink some, eat, eat or drink good coffee, or just walk outdoors just like that." ["My coping strategies, ahhh, even before the pandemic, right. Even before the pandemic, during the pandemic. As a teacher, honestly, I'm very routine, so when I get stressed, I will stop. I drop everything. I need to breathe air. I need to see something green. I need to walk outside. I need to talk to a few chosen friends. I need to

meditate and pray. I think basically that's my coping mechanism, maybe with work or personal because in the job that we have, teaching is a service work, so it's always your cup is full. So, what I've learned is there are times that, especially for me, if you're very passionate about what you do, you don't know when you're tired. It's like you just feel like you're getting you. You feel like your body is numb, and then at the end of the day, you just sleep, you forget to wash up, forget about yourself. So when those times happen, those times come. I know I need to pause and then empty my cup. Usually, I go travel, yeah. I like traveling alone or in small groups, or I fly back home to the Philippines and see and go to the beach. Only that go to something, go back to nature. More like that, or I eat. If it's not possible because of the schedule, I eat or drink some, eat, eat or drink good coffee, or just walk outdoors just like that." (Reign)

Rea believes that one should maintain connections with family and friends through regular communication. This can provide emotional support and a sense of continuity.

Then, of course, as long as you have, you know, regular calls with families and friends and that helps you out and find a way to find go find your own way to relax a little bit because you're just at home, watch, eat something good. And the same thing again, talk to colleagues, talk to friends, again there is much research, a lot of probably workshops, discussions that you can be involved to cope or find a solution to your current problems. ["Then, of course, as long as you have, you know, regular calls with families and friends, and that helps you out and find a way to find your own way to relax a little bit because you're just at home, watch, eat something good. And the same thing again, talk to colleagues, talk to friends, again there is a lot of research, a lot of probably workshops, discussions that you can be involved in to be able to cope up or find a solution to your current problems."] (Rea)

Leah explained that connecting with fellow Filipino teachers working in Indonesia and seeking support from local and expatriate colleagues is important. Sharing experiences, challenges, and advice can create a sense of community and provide valuable insights.

My friends outside. Colleagues, yes, as well, because whenever there's Filipinos. Yeah, yes. Yes, because aside from, we do understand each other, I share my difficulties my struggles with them. So, they help me a lot to survive. That's why I survived five years here in Indonesia. So, we always go out have talk, like we share information, we share opinions on each other and how to deal with those difficult children, difficult parents. Aside from that, I often call my family." ["My friends outside. Colleagues, yes, as well, because whenever there are Filipinos. Yes, because aside from understanding each other, I share my difficulties and struggles with them. So, they help me a lot to survive. That's why I survived five years here in Indonesia. So, we always go out and talk, like we share information, we share opinions on each other and how to deal with those difficult children, difficult parents. Aside from that, I often call my family. Yes, I talk to them. Tell stories of how are they today. I also do movie watching, listening to the music while working actually."] (Leah)

Lily and Rana give credence to joining religious activities such as attending church or joining religious organizations; they believe it can offer a range of benefits that contribute to their coping strategies and overall well-being. Religious communities provide a sense of belonging and support. Being part of a group with similar beliefs and values can create a strong social network that helps combat feelings of isolation and homesickness.

"Mine is going to church. So, because I'm a really church person, but not religious. But yeah, I'm a church person. Even in the Philippines, so also inadopt ko na din sya dito so, like pumunta ako sa church Sundays or sometimes weekdays nakikipag fellowship ako kahit minsan in person or via zoom. And then also the window shopping kahit minsan hindi talaga ako bumibili gusto ko lang lumabas kahit hindi ako kumakain. ["Mine is going to church because I'm a really church person, not religious. But yeah, I'm a church person. Even in the Philippines, so also inadopt ko na din sya dito so, like pumunta ako sa church Sundays or sometimes weekdays nakikipag fellowship ako kahit minsan in person or via zoom. And then also the window shopping kahit minsan hindi talaga ako bumibili gusto ko lang lumabas kahit hindi ako kumakain." Mine is going to church because I'm really a church person, not religious. But yeah, I'm a church person. Even in the Philippines, I also adopted it, I go to church on Sundays or sometimes on weekdays, and I do fellowship even sometimes in person or via Zoom. And then also window shopping even though sometimes I don't buy, I want to go out even if I don't eat."] (Lily)

"I also make my own support system from the church. I involve myself in Bible classes, prayer groups like that." ["I also make my own support system from the church. I involve myself in Bible classes, prayer groups like that."] (Rana)

Rana added that one should prioritize self-care by maintaining a healthy lifestyle, engaging in hobbies, and practicing relaxation techniques. Physical and mental well-being are essential for managing stress and maintaining energy levels.

"And of course, when it comes to sports, I tried Muay Thai. Wall climbing, so those are the weekends that you spend your time. Aside from doing your job, so it's not dragging anymore, like there's something new to learn." ["And, of course, when it comes to sports, I tried Muay Thai. Wall climbing, so those are the weekends that you spend your time. Aside from doing your job, so it's not dragging anymore, like there's something new to learn."] (Rana)

"So, my coping just to make myself relax is just like of course, watching TV, going out with friends and involving the community. If you have some sports friends, I mean you go out with sport, uh, playing sports and then yeah, going out and eating dinner with your friends. And sometimes during weekend also have a getaway from the city so that you can unwind. So, I think it helps me a lot." ["*So, my coping just to make myself relax is just like, of course, watching TV, going out with friends, and involving the community. If you have some sports friends, I mean you go out with the sport, uh, playing sports and then yeah, going out and eating dinner with your friends. And sometimes, during the weekend, you also have a getaway from the city to unwind. So, I think it helps me a lot.*"] (**Maya**)

The above statements corroborated with the study conducted by Sing (2022) that there are several mental, emotional, and physical advantages of having a sound mindset. A positive outlook can improve teachers' general welfare, help them deal with stress, and even strengthen their immune systems. The research has also demonstrated that a teacher's capacity for problem-solving and adaptation can be affected by their outlook on life. Positive thinking helps teachers feel more at ease and content, making it more straightforward to work and understand the new teaching environment effectively. Arcillo (2023) added that teachers who care about fostering a sound mindset learning environment go above and beyond to make them feel supported and engaged. Thus, teachers are less stressed, making them more productive in their work and raising their energies in addition to learning.

Filipino preschool teachers are flexible, especially when encountering unexpected challenges or plan changes. Being adaptable and open to change can reduce stress and improve problem-solving skills. Each Filipino preschool teacher's coping strategies are unique based on their personality, experiences, and circumstances. They must continually assess their well-being, adjust their coping strategies as needed, and seek support when necessary to ensure a successful and fulfilling experience while teaching abroad.

Conclusions

The study concluded that Filipino preschool teachers in Indonesia perceive their experience as both an opportunity and a challenge. While initially struggling with the curriculum, cultural integration, language barriers, and special education inclusion—especially during the pandemic—they eventually adapted, demonstrating resilience and commitment to their profession. Maintaining faith, moral principles, and strong relationships with colleagues and the local community helped them navigate challenges. To support future Filipino preschool teachers in Indonesia, the study recommends adaptability strategies such as attending special education training, learning about Indonesian culture, and improving cross-cultural communication. Sociability can be enhanced through visual aids, language learning, and collaboration with colleagues, while coping strategies include stress management activities, new hobbies, and exploring the country. These insights can guide aspiring educators in overcoming professional challenges and fostering a positive teaching environment.

Acknowledgment

The researcher expresses heartfelt gratitude to all individuals whose unwavering support and encouragement were instrumental in completing this study. Deep appreciation is extended to the School of Graduate Studies staff, faculty, and panel members for their guidance, expertise, and invaluable feedback, which enriched the research. Special thanks go to the conversation partners whose participation and insights greatly contributed to this study. The researcher is also grateful to her professors for their mentorship, which shaped her as an early childhood educator. Lastly, profound gratitude is given to family and friends for their constant encouragement, prayers, and unwavering support, with special acknowledgment to a beloved spouse for love, understanding, and patience throughout this journey.

References

- Alicamen, D. B., & Becamon, A. (2022). Overseas teaching: The voice of Filipino early childhood education teachers in Singapore. DOI:10.47836/pjssh.30.4.02
- Arcillo, M. (2023). Experiences of the Filipino teachers in the Virgin Islands: A Phenomenological theory development. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* ISSN: 2319-7064. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED626653.pdf>
- Ayu, N. M. L., Tirtayani, L. A., Psi, S., Psi, M., Abadi, I. B. G. S., & SE, M. (2019). Evaluasi program PAUD inklusi di kota Denpasar ditinjau dari hasil belajar dan perencanaan program lanjutan. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Undiksha*, 7(1), 57-67.
- Deguma, G., Cacho, A., Deguma, R. (2022). "Paghimakas": Lived Experiences of Filipino Teachers in Thailand during the Pandemic. *International Journal of Social Science And Human Research* ISSN (print): 2644-0679, ISSN(online): 2644-0695 Volume 05 Issue 02 February 2022 DOI: 10.47191/ijsshr/v5-i2-1
- Forbes LK, Lamar MR, Speciale M, Donovan C. (2021). Mothers' and fathers' parenting attitudes during COVID-19. *Current Psychology*.
- Hassan, M. (2022). Purposive sampling – Definition. <https://researchmethod.net/purposive-sampling/>

- Korstjens, L., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical Guidance to Qualitative Research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and Publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24, 120-124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092>
- Modesto, O. P. (2020). A phenomenological study of Filipino immigrant teachers in South Texas. *The Qualitative Report*, 25(8), 3149-3162. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4225>
- Moran, A. (2021). 8 Unexpected Challenges that Teachers Face Abroad. <https://www.gooverseas.com/blog/8-unexpected-hurdles-teachers-face-abroad>.
- Morin, Amanda (2023). What is special education? <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/understanding-special-education>
- Reyes, J. et al. (2020) From Exposition to Adaptation: The Lived Experience of Filipino Educators Working in an International School Setting, A Phenomenology. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*. Vol 5 Issue 12.
- Sahito, Z., & Vaisanen, P. (2019). A Narrative Analysis of Teacher Educators' Motivation: Evidence from the Universities of Sindh, Pakistan. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(4), 673-682. <http://dx.doi.org/eres.qnl.qa/10.17507/jltr.1004.02>
- Sanjari M, Bahramnezhad F, Fomani FK, Shoghi M, Cheraghi MA. Ethical challenges of researchers in qualitative studies: the necessity to develop a specific guideline. *J Med Ethics Hist Med*. 2014 Aug 4;7:14. PMID: 25512833; PMCID: PMC4263394.
- Sari, A (2019). The advantages and disadvantages of english learning for early childhood education in Indonesia. *Global Expert*. ISSN PRINT : 2303-5328 *Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra* volume 8 No.1 Juli 2019
- Sarif, N (20220). Teaching Crisis and Teachers' Role in Times of Covid-19 Pandemic. <https://countercurrents.org/2020/08/teaching-crisis-and-teachers-role-in-times-of-covid-19-pandemic/>
- Serbes, M. (2017). Teaching abroad: Why teachers prefer teaching overseas. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*. ISSN 2520-0968 (Online), ISSN 2409-1294 (Print), December 2017, Vol.4, No.3
- Spiteri, J. (2021). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's mental health and well-being, and beyond: A scoping review. *Journal of Childhood, Education & Society*, 2(2), 126-138. <https://doi.org/10.37291/2717638X.20212294>
- Suhendri (2020). The challenges of inclusive education in Indoensia. *Journal of Research in Business, Economics, and Eductaion*. Vol 2 Issue 5 October Edition E-ISSN 2686-6056 <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/438297-the-challenges-of-inclusive-education-in-da48fa8b.pdf>
- UNESCO. (2020). Policy brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond. https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_educa tion_august_2020.pdf
- Uytico, B. J., & Abadiano, M. N. (2020). Teachers' tales: In-depth exploration on experiences of millennial Filipino teachers abroad. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7(17), 1952-1960
- Van Laere K, Peeters J, Vandenbroeck M. The education and care divide: The role of the early childhood workforce in 15 European countries. *European Journal of Education*. 2012;47(4):527-541. doi: 10.1111/ejed.12006.
- Van Lancker, W., & Parolin, Z. (2020). COVID-19, school closures, and child poverty: A social crisis in the making. *The Lancet Public Health*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(20\)30084-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(20)30084-0)
- Windarsih, C. A., Jumiadin, D., Efrizal, E., Sumini, N., & Utami, L. O. (2017). Implementasi pendidikan anak usia dini inklusif di kota Cimahi Jawa Barat. *Jurnal Ilmiah P2M STKIP Siliwangi*, 4(2), 7-11.
- Yildiz, S., Kilic, G.N. & Acar, I.H. Early Childhood Education During the COVID-19 Outbreak: The Perceived Changing Roles of Preschool Administrators, Teachers, and Parents. *Early Childhood Educ J* 51, 743-753 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-022-01339-w>
- Zhang, M., Bai, Y., & Li, Z. (2020). Effect of Resilience on the Mental Health of Special Education Teachers: Moderating Effect of Teaching Barriers. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*.