



Why Teach in the Philippines: Voices of the Committed Public Elementary School Teachers

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Abstract:

This study investigated the reasons why teachers stayed and remain committed to the teaching profession despite opportunities abroad. It delved into their experiences, which reinforced their decision to stay. The participants of this study are 10 Filipino teachers who shared their unique experiences through one-on-one interviews using an online platform. This qualitative study employs a multiple case study following Robert Yin's multiple case study format, using a validated semi-structured interview as the primary method of data collection. Each case was analyzed using the with-in-case analysis. In order to answer the domain of inquiry of this study and to come up with themes and models as the output of this research study, thematic analysis was utilized. With thorough investigation and treatment of data, five major themes emerged: Filipino Teachers are Steadfast and Secured, Filipino Teachers Cultivating Tomorrow's Leaders, Filipino Teachers Toward Career Heights, Upholding the Dignity of Filipino Teachers, and Heart at Home. This study reveals that teachers have diverse reasons for staying in the profession. From the generated themes, a work commitment model was developed, called the P.E.R.E.Z Work Commitment Model. This work commitment model describes the fundamental reasons why Filipino educators, instead of pursuing opportunities abroad, choose to remain dedicated to their job in the Philippines. Moreover, this can be used to understand and address the factors that influence the dedication of Filipino teachers to their work in the Philippines. People in authority may develop ways on how to retain teachers in the Philippines and maintain their commitment with the use of this model.

Keywords: Commitment, P.E.R.E.Z Work Commitment Model, multiple case study, reasons

Introduction:

Commitment, as described by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), signifies the emotional attachment employees have to their organization. In a broader sense, committed employees often sense a strong connection with their workplace, feel a sense of belonging, and comprehend the organization's objectives. When an individual harbors commitment to their job, they are inclined to engage in tasks and fulfill responsibilities that contribute to the organization's achievement of its goals. According to Price and Collett (2012), commitment can be enhanced and developed by different factors.

Within the realm of education, teachers' commitment to their work is crucial because they are thought of as agents of change in society and in the development of nations. Teachers have more duties than just teaching the curriculum; they are essential in developing students into morally aware, honest, and decent citizens.

Teaching is a beautiful profession, but being a teacher cannot ensure that one is financially stable. It is a profession which demands crucial and most oftentimes, conflicting concerns. One has to generously share his or her personal time, talents, and treasure despite life and work problems, difficulties, and challenges. Hence, teaching is the noblest profession, a highly-regarded occupation, and a lifetime mission.

In an article written by SM Valenzona and published by the Inquirer.Net in 2022, he talked over the topic of choosing and staying in the Philippines to teach over better opportunities overseas. The author explained why he chose to stay in spite of chances coming his way. This might be true for most of the educators in the Philippines as well. In a profession where going abroad has become a trend to experience better chances, a higher salary, and professional growth, staying committed needs a strong mind and heart.

Presently, according to Senator Joel Villanueva in his press release dated September 5, 2023, there are 847,467 teachers in the Philippines. In addition, the POEA has reported that from 2013 to 2017, an average of 1,500 teachers go abroad every year in search of a different opportunity. Better salaries and benefits are luring our teachers to countries like Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States of America. Despite the trend, the researcher believes there are still lots of teachers who stay committed to their oaths over those who left. For whatever reasons they have, this is something that we must be thankful for.

There has been a lot of research on the reasons why teachers quit, but less on the reasons why some of the people stick with their chosen careers despite obstacles and setbacks. Based on the researcher's observation of the current situation in Limay District, a greater number of teachers remained faithful regardless of the problems and



concerns they had in their day-to-day undertakings. From 2021 up to the present, only three teachers have decided to leave the profession in exchange of better opportunities abroad, and the researcher is one of them. Despite the adversities, 302 teachers stayed committed to their profession. This scenario shows that the majority of the teachers in the district still chose to serve the nation and the department, while only a few chose to leave. Those who have stayed are managing several responsibilities, such as tutoring, being parents, being spouses, and running their own businesses, demonstrating once more that teaching is more of a calling than a career in the Philippines.

According to Casely-Hayford et al. (2022), individual characteristics, particularly those related to teachers' perceived health, work motivation, and collegial support, mostly explain their intention to stay in the field. This highlights the significance of a health-promoting work environment in schools by indicating the significance of teachers' perceived health states for their intention to stay in the field. Moreover, according to the Job Embedded Theory, there are factors that connect employees to their jobs and communities (Mitchell et. al 2001). It includes links, fit, and sacrifice that will help us understand the factors that contribute to teachers' commitment and retention.

There is no denying that contented educators exhibit greater commitment, tenacity, and enthusiasm towards advancing the educational system. However, if a teacher is unhappy with his current position, his only option is to leave the nation or work for a different opportunity. It is true that a competent worker will always have plenty of options. It is a basic human right to choose to teach abroad or go for other work; no one could block teachers from moving abroad in search of better prospects. Employees might leave the system for any reason, whether personal or professional.

With the current trends in the teaching profession where young and competitive teachers leave their job for better opportunities overseas, the purpose of this study is to assess the individual experiences of committed teachers in Limay District and determine the true reason for their continued commitment. Given that it serves the research's objectives, multiple case studies will be conducted. This study investigated the key contributing factors in teachers' long-term commitment to their profession and came up with a work commitment model about the key contributing factors in teachers' retention that will serve as a foundation for educational institutions to devise plans for retaining educators and reducing teacher attrition across the nation.

Literature Review:

The researcher forbids himself from reading any relevant studies and literature in order to prevent preconceptions. Since the goal is to obtain a first-hand result without the assistance of earlier dissertations and papers, this has been put on hold. The researcher took into consideration the theoretical stance and intends to suspend prior assumptions in order to avoid contaminating the inductive data and to justify the emergence of themes from the phenomenon, which is the fundamental purpose of qualitative research studies. Ignored beliefs are as much a product of life events as they are of study outcomes in the future.

After gaining an understanding of the experiences, the theory will be identified. This will enable a close examination of people's experiences throughout time and in context, as well as a perspective on the phenomena of people's experiences and a methodology for narratively enquiring into experience. Lastly, important themes and interpretations on the main contributing elements to teachers' long-term commitment in public schools will need to be drawn from the transcripts.

The qualitative nature of this study can be explained by looking at its foundations in methodology, ontology, epistemology, and axiology. It would be beneficial to gain a deeper understanding of the primary contributing variables to teachers' long-term commitment in public schools from these sources of ideas.

The study's ontology delves into the true causes of teachers' retention in the field by focusing on their experiences as teachers in public primary schools. Every teacher, as the researcher believes, has personal reasons for staying in their current position. However, the researcher will also explore the similarities among those elements. To do this, representatives from every school in the district will be interviewed in order to get appropriate data. Inclusion and exclusion criteria will be used to verify that the results are real. This will enable the researcher to investigate the actual factors affecting the retention of teachers in the Limay District.

The study's axiological viewpoint looked at the researcher's assessment of the significance and character of the teachers' colorful careers as elementary school teachers in the District of Limay. The qualities, morals, and personalities of the teachers that motivate them to continue serving for a long time will be determined by the researcher. The study will also concentrate on the driving forces behind their continued devotion and perseverance. The study's epistemological perspective will be centered on the experiences of public elementary school teachers in Limay District, Division of Bataan, who have had remarkable careers in teaching. The researcher is going to fully immerse himself in the participants, focusing on the aspects that contribute to their retention. Following a number



of years of teaching, the educators will respond to questions about their experiences, which will be recorded for the researcher to review, decipher, and draw conclusions from.

The study's methodological viewpoint applied a qualitative strategy with narrative inquiry as the primary research methodology. The technique for gathering data is through semi-structured virtual interviews. This approach is very useful for gathering precise information that is pertinent to teachers' jobs. In order to document the informant's data, the researcher must concentrate on the informant's experiences, motivations, and reasons for continuing in the profession. The study stressed the significance of validity in the application of appropriate questions to ascertain the individual differences in the personalities, viewpoints, and opinions of the informant.

Methodology:

Design:

The research objectives are to comprehensively explore and understand the key factors influencing long-term teacher commitment in the District of Limay, despite the chances of going abroad or landing a different career. This qualitative study employed a multiple case study following Robert Yin's multiple case study format, focusing on the reasons why teachers continued to work in public elementary schools in the District of Limay, using a semi-structured interview as the primary method of data collection. The semi-structured interview guide was developed for flexibility and depth and covered essential factors. This interview guide was checked, reviewed, and validated by experts. The participant selection process involves certain criteria, like years in service, those who had the opportunity to go abroad or to try other career, and willingness to participate in the study, while ethical considerations prioritize informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

To examine and analyse the data gathered, within-case analysis and thematic analysis were employed, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings. Continuous assessment of data saturation guided the determination of when a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing teacher retention had been achieved.

Locale:

Limay District, in the Schools Division of Bataan, has thirteen elementary schools. It has a total of 11,034 students, 302 teachers, 12 school heads, and 16 non-teaching staff. The landscape of the municipality is varied and includes industrial, agricultural, and coastal elements. The Department of Education employs qualified teachers to present the curriculum, and school facilities vary in quality. As a result, the local municipality is supportive in terms of infrastructure and other school needs in Limay. Since the researcher was a former teacher who was still connected to the district, this is the location of the study that was selected.

Participants

Ten (10) teachers who have been in the service for 15 years and above and who chose to stay committed to the profession despite the opportunity to leave the country for a better life were the focus of this study. Their willingness to participate was considered as well. When conducting qualitative interviews with teachers, data saturation was observed. Its goal is to gather details on the experiences of the teachers teaching in a public elementary school in Limay and the reasons behind their commitment to their chosen career. The participants were chosen using the Purposive Sampling Method. As a type of non-probability sampling where the researcher used their judgment to pick study participants from the population, judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling was permitted. As a result, only teachers who met the requirements were considered participants.

The criteria are as follows: a.) They have been in the service for 15 years and above; b.) They are teaching in a public school in Limay District; c.) They had the opportunity to go abroad or to have another job but decided to stay in the Philippines; d.) They are ready to share their genuine stories as seasoned teachers; e.) They are willing to participate and cooperate in the said undertaking.

Instrument

This study requires a skilled researcher to conduct credible, dependable, and valid interviews while following ethical research guidelines. With the knowledge acquired through rigorous coursework and personal experiences, the researcher was well prepared in conducting this comprehensive study.

The main tool for gathering data for the study was a semi-structured interview guide. By encouraging a two-way communication process during interviews, this method helped the researcher obtain comprehensive insights. Using this approach, it made easier for the researcher to gather qualitative data and gave the researcher the chance to learn more about the underlying causes of the answers they find, in addition to providing answers to specific questions.

The interview questions were asked the informants to narrate their teaching experiences in a public elementary school and the reasons why they chose to stay in the profession. Follow-up questions would be asked as well when necessary to collect richer data that would help the researcher have a substantial and comprehensive result from the study. The three question elements are present in each part of the interview guide questions: the main



question, probing and developing questions, and lastly, the concluding question. The interview guide questions were checked, reviewed, and validated by the experts.

Data Gathering Procedures

A systematic approach is needed to collect data in order to understand teacher retention in public schools and the factors that lead to their continued commitment. The researcher observed the detailed procedures in the data collection process. In order to obtain the precise qualitative data required for the study, pre-, actual, and post-data gathering processes were observed and followed.

Pre-data gathering

design hearing after the creation of Chapters 1 and 2. Following the technical panel's screening and assessment of the first manuscript, the researcher made the necessary adjustments based on their feedback. Then, before being recommended to the Research Ethics Committee (REC), the panelists' recommendations and counsel were taken into consideration. The REC reviewed the manuscript to ensure that the researcher complied with the recommendations. Following the REC study results, the researcher adhered to the recommendations and submitted the required paperwork once more. The REC accepted the manuscripts after it determined that everything was in order and advised the researcher to move on to the data gathering procedure with an NTP certificate. Additionally, before the research was conducted, the researcher asked permission from the Dean of the Graduate School of Education regarding the conduct of the research and interview. A transmittal letter with approval from the Dean was submitted to the Schools Division Superintendent of Bataan to ask her permission to conduct the research, and then another letter was sent to the District Supervisor. After acquiring all the permits, the researcher sent an email to the informants, who were chosen based on the criteria and informed of the purpose of the research undertakings. The researcher ensured a varied range of teachers in terms of schools, grade levels, and experience. Prior to the interviews, they got written consent and were aware of the goal of the study.

Actual Data Gathering

Upon the release of the research clearance and the respondents were informed, the researcher conducted the actual administration of the research and interviews through Google Meet, Zoom or other online platforms, depending on the respondent's choice. The actual interview was done for about 45 to 60 minutes. The study was on a voluntary basis; any teachers can withdraw or refuse to participate in the research study.

This qualitative research used semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection. In this manner, an open-ended art of questioning during interviews was the responsible task of the researcher that aimed to acquire relevant information about the teachers' experiences in public schools and the reasons for their long-term commitment to the profession. The questions used encouraged participants to provide in-depth and reflective responses about the problem studied.

To be able to transcribe properly, the interview was recorded after permission was asked from the key informants. All data collected and analyzed were kept confidential, with no disclosure of any identifying characteristics.

A debriefing statement was given or read to the informants at the conclusion of their participation in the study. This was done for ethical reasons, where the researcher discussed the intention, flow, and resulting findings from the undertaken data collection activity.

Post-data Gathering

After the interview as part of post-administration, it is time to transcribe the information given by making meaning, ideas, concepts, and significant themes about their experiences in public school and the key contributing factors in their long-term commitment. At this point, the researcher acted as a data analyst as well. Using the data gathered, transcribed, and encoded, the researcher interpreted the significance of the data. The researcher used the methods and procedures of research that apply to the report. Data coding and thematic analysis as primary data analysis were employed.

Data Analysis

In this study, the researcher utilized within-case analysis and thematic analysis to extract and interpret the qualitative data that were accumulated from the data gathering procedure. To study each individual case, the researcher employed within-case analysis, which involved a detailed investigation of each case. The first step was a comprehensive evaluation of all pertinent information gathered from each respondent's interview. After that, the researcher looked for important themes and patterns in the data. The researcher next arranged this data into a logical story that illustrates the case in detail and is backed up by concrete proof. Lastly, the researcher evaluated the results' relationships, determined how important they were to your research objectives, and outlined the main features of the case. To determine the commonalities and differences of each experience, the researcher used thematic analysis. The process began with a familiarization phase, where all responses that would be gathered from the interview were diligently read multiple times, ensuring the researcher was fully immersed in the depth and range of the data. This immersion paved the way for the initial coding phase, wherein discernible patterns within the responses were encapsulated with preliminary codes. As the process evolved, these individual codes began to converge, forming more encompassing themes and subthemes in the theme development stage.



However, the journey of these themes did not end there; each underwent a critical review against the backdrop of the initial codes and the dataset to affirm their validity and resonance. To analyze the relationships and connections among the data identify patterns and relationships, followed by categories and themes. Afterwards, the researcher created a narrative or storyline that reflected on the findings within the individual cases. At this point, the researcher interpreted the findings within the context of existing literature, theories, or frameworks, reflect on his own biases, assumptions, and the research process itself, and documented the decisions made throughout the analysis to ensure transparency and rigor of the study.

Findings and Discussion:

Theme 1: Filipino Teachers are Steadfast and Secured. This theme is about how teachers' jobs are stable and the benefits they get when they are hired full-time. This is anchored to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, as cited in Maslow and Lewis (1987). Job stability satisfies the second stage of Maslow's hierarchy, which is safety needs. This includes financial security, health, and well-being. Stable employment provides a predictable income and benefits that protect against economic uncertainty, contributing to overall safety and security. Another theory that supports this is Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), as cited in Alshmemri et al. (2017), which states that job security is considered a hygiene factor. Job stability is crucial for maintaining baseline satisfaction and preventing dissatisfaction. Norton (1999) mentioned in his study that teachers are concerned about job security. Morover, Olobia (2024) says that job security makes it easier for teachers to stay in their jobs and that steadiness in the job market is higher in public schools. Furthermore, Ghimire et al. (2003) also showed how important job security is for encouraging loyalty and effectiveness in schools, stressing the need for proactive steps to enhance job security to boost teachers' commitment to their organizations.

This was one of the main themes that came up when teacher respondents stated their reasons why they could have gone abroad or changed careers but decided to stay in the field. They feel safe and secure in their jobs as public school teachers. Participants said that if you stay in the service, you will keep getting paid even when you're on vacation. There are also many other perks. This is in line with Republic Act No. 4670 (1966), also called the Magna Carta of Public School Teachers. This law gives public school teachers in the Philippines a lot of job security, including benefits like health insurance, retirement plans, and paid leave, as well as protections for teachers who have been there for a long time. The goal of these rules is to protect teachers' jobs and make their jobs more stable and satisfying.

"It's bread and butter, the teaching here in the Philippines. So when you get a national position, you're stable. Yes, you are stable. Until you get older, 65 years old, you know that you will get many benefits from the government. Maybe that is what appeals to teaching. Even if you are just a beginner, there benefits you will get from the government.

Participant 1

"Narealize ko din, dito hindi ka tanggalin. Kahit tumanda ka na, hindi ka gaya kung ikaw ay sa ibang trabaho o bansa. Kailangan mong sandalan ang trabaho. Dito talagang kampante ka. Kaya tayo ang daming nag-offer ng loan sa atin kasi di naman tayo mawawalan ng trabaho buwan-buwan meron ka kahit vacation pay. Kaya kahit one million na-offer nga tayo. May MTMAS pa. Meron ka pa GSIS."

Participant 4

Everybody is aiming for a stable job or career and the benefits that come with it. After obtaining a degree, individuals seek a long-lasting job for various reasons, such as meeting their family's needs, improving their economic status, or seeking personal benefits. Whatever the reason may be, everybody needs a stable and long-lasting job opportunity in order to live.

In addition to job stability, respondents also mentioned the benefits that come with it. Teachers in the Philippines receive a wide range of bonuses and special incentives. They also receive retirement benefits, PhilHealth, GSIS, and many other benefits. It was particularly evident when a pandemic struck the world. As stated in DepEd Order No. 003, s. 2020, there would be no salary deduction for teachers during the Enhanced Community Quarantine Period, which is also covered by Republic Act No. 11469 (2020), also known as the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act. During school closures, public school teachers, among other government employees, earn their salaries without performing any work at school. Teachers receive their salary in full, despite having to pay monthly amortization on their loans. In addition to that, bonuses from national and local governments also benefited the teachers. Moreover, teachers can easily apply for loans when they need instant money to spend on important matters or emergencies.

The study's findings, according to Duflo et al. (2012), indicated a strong response from teachers to financial incentives. Even though financial incentives and bonuses are superficial, they still influence one's decision to stay in their chosen profession. According to the participants, job security, benefits, and protection helped them stay committed to their jobs. This is true, according to Akpan (2013). His study revealed that job security significantly



predicts the organizational commitment of teachers. It also suggests that securing teachers' jobs should lead to an increase in their organizational commitment. This finding corroborates that of Iverson (1996), who reported that job security has a significant impact on employees' organizational commitment.

On the other hand, there are heartbreaking stories about OFWs returning to the Philippines for retirement after spending a certain amount of time working abroad. The Saguin (2020) study reveals that Filipino OFWs prioritize social reintegration over financial preparation with their income. This means that instead of saving their money for retirement, they use it to sustain their family needs and remittances. Manapol et al. (2022) also support this, stating that the top three spending items of OFWs are remittances to family back home, food, and communication. The left-behind families, on the other hand, spend the money they receive on education, food, utilities, and transportation. Not all OFWs are lucky enough to become citizens or permanent residents of the country where they worked, and unfortunately, not all of them are wise enough to save and plan for their future, leading to unfortunate outcomes.

Teacher respondents choose to stay and not pursue a career abroad because they feel secure about their post. Teaching is their main source of income, which they use to spend on their personal and family needs.

Theme 2: Filipino Teachers Cultivating Tomorrow's Leaders. The second theme is about the purpose that the respondents found and felt when in their teaching career, which is devoting their time to make their learners succeed, which is why they stayed. This theme centers on the love they have for their Filipino students. During the coding process, concepts such as service, sense of purpose, satisfaction, responsibility, and inspiration emerged, leading to the development of this theme. This can be anchored to the Flow Theory of Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2014). It describes the psychological mental state of a person who is immersed in an activity with energized concentration, optimal enjoyment, full involvement, and intrinsic interests, and who is usually focused, motivated, positive, energized, and aligned with the task. In connection with teachers, they may experience a flow state when they are fully engaged in teaching and see students learning and participating actively. This state of flow contributes significantly to job satisfaction.

Participants from this study mentioned that the main reason why they did not pursue their career abroad was that they felt that they were needed here and that they had something to share or give to the Filipino learners. Here are some of the statements that validate this theme.

I feel I am more needed here than going out of the country or of the system. So that's it. I feel like I can see myself here. Salary, no. Opportunity, no. I see that children need me. Not for them to learn, but to prepare them as an adult, as an individual. For example, even if they cannot finish their studies, they can fight for their lives. That is what I see.

Participant 1

"I'm already teaching here. It just suddenly disappeared. And I'm already teaching. You're just going to do the same thing when you go abroad. Why not stay? I'm encouraged to be a head teacher but I can't pursue it because I can only see in myself that I'm a teacher, I teach with children. It's just like that. It's always been that cycle, sir.

Participant 3

"Ang naisip mo palagi ang mga estudyante mo, alam mo ang lagi silang naisip na nakakapagod ang magturo, nakakaumay, pero iniisip mo na itong mga bata na ito, magiging bahagi ka lang ng buhay nila at magiging mapaganda mo ang buhay nila. Yan yung mga estudyante ko. Yong sasabihin mo nga lang, hindi na ako magcoach, aalis na ako. Yung tipo pag may nagsabi sa akin, si Ma'am naman, nakangarap pa nga kami maglaro pagkatapos iiwanan mo. May narami lang din ako mga hesitations aside from yung pangarap mo na makaalis is yung iiwanan mo. Mahirap pa rin mag let go. Yun siguro yung isang factor. Kaya I stay, I am still staying."

Participant 5

The study conducted by Yao et al. in 2005, as referenced by Ancho and Bongco (2019), indicates that Filipino workers are driven by internal variables. Teachers' intrinsic motivation stems from their conviction that their services exert a substantial influence on the lives and prospects of the students they teach. According to Kan (2015), one author argues that the presence of all other occupations is made feasible due to the initial presence of a teacher. Every other occupation is dependent on the presence of a teacher who, with unwavering commitment and dedication, fulfills a diverse range of responsibilities in the classroom. These include not only the primary task of teaching and facilitating learning but also other essential duties related to the teaching profession (Wang'eri and Okello, 2014). This level of dedication significantly impacts a teacher's work, as it is a crucial component for achieving good outcomes. Moreover, contemporary leaders who achieve success can attribute their accomplishments to the education provided by their teachers, the imparting of essential knowledge, and the inculcation of appropriate values (Chong et al., 2015).



It is true that all of them had plans to teach abroad, but they gave up this dream to focus on educating the nation's future generations. It is truly a big sacrifice on the part of the teachers. As Soccorsi (2013) mentioned, educating the youth is never an easy journey, as it requires sacrifices, commitment, and dedication to fulfill one's mission of providing quality, relevant, and accessible education for all. For them, the joy and satisfaction of teaching Filipino learners are incomparable and satisfying. As cited in Solomon et al. (2012), research has revealed that public school teachers go into the teaching profession mostly for fundamental and noble reasons. Their primary expression of this is their desire to work with and teach young children. Teachers continue to teach simply because they want to make a difference in the lives of future generations (Nieto, as cited in Petrucci et al., 2016). Filipino teachers find their sense of purpose in being responsible for the future of the Filipino learners they are handling. As McCallum and Price (2010) stated, teachers shape the future by shaping or molding the youth of today. Teachers shape, develop, and nurture the future leaders and nation-builders (Parvez & Shakir, 2013). Their children's success is also their success.

It doesn't mean that teaching or working in another country will not give you a sense of satisfaction, but it hits differently when you are serving your own countrymen and seeing them achieve their success and goals. This shows love for and support for the youth of our country. Teacher respondents showed selflessness when they chose to stay over the lure of a high salary in another country to teach Filipino children.

Teachers are the ones responsible for honing young minds and preparing them for the future, so it is necessary for teachers to give their full support and effort to do their job in the best way they can. They demonstrated their patriotism and love for our country by opting to teach Filipino children instead of foreign learners. Throughout their service, teachers also developed a certain degree of relationship among their students, which is why they keep coming back and reaching out to them.

During the interview, the respondents shared memorable moments when they encountered former students who had struggled but eventually achieved success. It is really fulfilling for them to know that they have contributed to their success. They left a mark on each individual student, and the amount of impact that they made among these students is priceless. Teachers believe in the importance of their work in their students' lives and in their future. As Mart (2013) asserted, it is commitment to student achievement that distinguishes a passionate teacher.

It shows that most of the respondents like their job, enjoy their teaching profession, and have favorable outcomes for their work performance because it is their oath to mold and shape the learning process of the students. This has led to a high level of job satisfaction among the respondents, indicating that teaching is considered the noblest profession.

Entering the teaching profession requires a willingness to go above and beyond, demonstrate selflessness, and offer oneself as a solution to eradicate all forms of ignorance and guide the youth towards a better life. Those who cannot offer themselves in the name of authentic public service have no place in an organization where commitment and dedication to truly serve are of primordial importance.

Theme 3: Filipino Teachers toward Career Heights. The third theme encapsulates the idea that teachers stay committed to their work despite opportunities abroad for career advancement. Promotion or advancement in one's career is a form of reward; thus, Asaari et al. (2019) concluded that as the reward increased, the motivation and retention of employees would also increase. Promotion, achievements, transformation, learning something new, and reward codes paved the way for the development of this theme. This is in connection to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, as cited in Alshmemri et al. (2017), which affirms that there are certain factors in the workplace that cause job satisfaction. For teachers, promotions are strong motivators as they provide recognition, responsibility, and opportunities for professional growth and achievement, which are the key to job satisfaction.

Based on the responses of the participants, one of the factors that contributed to teachers' commitment was the opportunity for promotion or professional growth. It is important to note that out of the 10 participants, six have the esteemed position of master teachers, which is highly coveted by most educators due to its attractive compensation and prestigious status. Malinao (2022) emphasizes in his research that rewards, such as promotions, have a positive impact on employee motivation and dedication to their job. In addition, schools might utilize career advancement as the main method to facilitate ongoing learning and enhancement of teachers' skills, guaranteeing the effective fulfillment of their responsibilities (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013), as cited by Teasley, (2017). Conversely, according to Abu-Tineh et al. (2023), if teachers are unhappy with the existing system for progressing in their careers, it will have a substantial impact on their job satisfaction and their decision to stay in their profession. According to a study conducted by Patil (2023), offering teachers the chance to improve and implementing a well-defined career advancement plan can contribute to their retention. In addition, Kossivi et al., (2016) stated in their research that career advancement prospects and training programs play a crucial role in influencing employees' decisions to stay with a company. Furthermore, a study conducted by Mehta et al. (2014) demonstrates that the presence of career prospects leads to increased employee tenure and heightened loyalty.



Consequently, when employees achieve progress in their professional trajectory, they will sense contentment and drive, which will result in their retention and ongoing dedication.

A few respondents said they were about to apply for a promotion abroad when they received an offer. As a result, they chose not to pursue it. Others were already in a high-ranking position and were scared to leave and start over. Below are a few statements that corroborate this idea.

"Pangalawa kahit paano may narating ako sa ginitong edad na ako, kahit Papaano may narating ako na position. Na promote ako as a Master Teacher last year."

Participant 6

"I also applied for a teaching position in United States, sir. But every time I go to the office, there's a 9-11, September 11 bombing. So yeah, it was the time, yes. That time when I am applying for the teaching position. So I went to the agency apply, but there's a ranking for Master Teacher 1 and luckily I was selected. So maybe it's not time for me to go outside the country. Because God is providing for a good promotion for me, a good teaching career here in the Philippines for me."

Participant 7

"I was promoted when I had plans going abroad. I was the bread winner of the family so of course I wanted to earn more. But when I became a master teacher, I decided not to go. My promotion gave me opportunity to earn better."

Participant 10

It is obvious that career promotion gives employees a sense of empowerment and rewards their hard work. In return, they will work hard and do their best. Malinao and Ebi (2022) confirmed this, stating that rewards like pay, promotion, bonuses, and other forms of recognition motivate employees and enhance their performance and commitment. According to Reyes et al. (2019), it is crucial for those in authority to understand the career goals of their employees. It is critical to outline and communicate the goals they want to pursue. This will influence their job satisfaction and retention.

Executive Order No. 174 (2022) affirms the state's commitment to improving teachers' opportunities for career growth and ensuring that teaching is able to attract and retain highly skilled individuals by providing enough compensation and other sources of job satisfaction and fulfillment. This is likely advantageous for educators who want to enhance their professional development. It is commendable for the government to prioritize retaining teachers in the Philippines.

Attaining promotion in the Philippines is a challenging endeavor due to various variables, including a limited supply of positions, stringent qualifications, and intense competition. It is apparent that the majority of the respondents attained their desired position through diligent effort, and they find it challenging to relinquish it. Occupying that position afforded them the chance to cater to the financial requirements of both their family and themselves, as it entailed a raise in their income. Nevertheless, this role also entails a certain degree of accountability.

Theme 4: Upholding the Dignity of Filipino Teachers. Common codes like recognition, trust, feeling loved, and belongingness are the foundation of the fourth theme. These codes were based on the responses of some teachers during the interview. Respondents mentioned that one of the reasons they did not pursue their application abroad was the level of recognition and value of teachers in the Philippines. In connection to this, Expectancy Theory by Vroom, as cited in Estes and Polnick (2012), suggests that individuals are motivated to perform if they know that their extra performance is recognized and rewarded. Recognition and incentives, as studied by Pillazar et al. (2024), emerged as the primary retention strategy, significantly influencing employee satisfaction and fostering a sense of belonging. The study concludes that these strategies are effective, contributing to the retention of skilled professionals. Pillazar et al. (2024) also emphasized the importance of recognizing and providing incentives as core strategies for administrators in educational settings, recognizing their role in creating a positive work environment, and promoting sustained employee commitment.

We all know that teachers are highly recognized and respected in the Philippines. Marpa and Trinidad (2018) mentioned that teaching, as a profession, is noble, dignified, responsible, and well respected. We consider teachers as molders of young minds and models of society. There are other professions out there, but teachers are different, which they are called the noblest profession.

The recognition and respect that teachers gain in the community from the students, parents, co-teachers, principal, and other people is enough reason for teachers to stay committed to their job. A study by Zhang et al. (2022) has shown that other non-financial elements such as rewards, social recognition, and performance feedback positively influence the motivation of teachers to stay. In addition to that, Andrews (2011) stressed that teachers receiving recognition and awards for their teaching provides motivation for them to continue high-level instruction. Teacher educators should find 'recognition' an important part of their teaching.



The abovementioned research findings support the statements of some respondents. Teacher respondents revealed that they feel motivated and recognized when students reach out to them to say thank you for all the sacrifices and patience they have shown for them.

"The positive experiences, especially when you got recognition. It is like you uplift yourself. Recognition of people, not just because of the certificates I receive. The people around you who recognize that you are good. Saka yung mga bata din. Yung mga bata din. (which pertains to the Filipino children) Yong, Ay ma'am, sa'yo ko natuto ng ganito eh. Tapos, ayun. Yan yung ano, yung masasabi ko na bakit ako nagstay sa teaching.. Dahil sa kanila."

Participant 1

This scenario made them feel acknowledged, valued, respected, and kept the fire for teaching Filipino learners alive. A simple thank you for the hard work hits differently when sincerely said. Mertler (2016) mentioned that students who express their appreciation by saying thank you to their teacher for helping them understand a difficult concept are receiving a form of reward and recognition. This let the teachers experience the joy of helping their students learn, grow, and develop as children and young adults. Moreover, a study by Shahzad et al. (2024) mentioned that the implementation of specific psychological practices such as praise, thanks, and respect enhanced recognition and its potential association with increased self-esteem among teachers.

Respondents mentioned specific instances when students reached out to them and expressed their gratitude. Being mentioned in a valedictory speech to say thank you, sending personal messages on Facebook, and even scenarios like crossing each other's path unexpectedly and expressing their gratitude to the former teacher are some forms of recognition teachers appreciate.

"Well, there is this one time, I don't know, I can't remember her name. But her message was so long. Which goes like, Ma'am, thank you for meeting me. I've been looking for you on Facebook for a long time. I answered her, Why? Why are you looking for Ma'am? Because Ma'am, If it wasn't because of you, If you didn't make me endure my loneliness, If you didn't let me go, I won't go to the States, I won't finish my studies I told her not to lie to me No ma'am, I am very honest with you, because she is really a bad student She is really stubborn, she has a hard head, she has no direction I told her to be strong, because she has a problem I said, sure, I hope there's no problem. But through my guidance, she became a certified nurse in San Diego, California. And she's very thankful because during her dark days, I was there. That makes me... I said it...It's more than money or any certificate that you get from the... from the... from the DepEd. She really looked for me on Facebook just to make sure that she can thank me... That is what really gave me fulfillment and I felt really rewarded on that."

Participant 3

"Para sa akin, yung simple thank you, you've been appreciated kasi alam nila ginawa mo yung effort mo. Even yung non-reader mo, let's say pumasok sa iyo yung bata na non-reader siya, Pinagsagaan mo kahit ganit ka, kahit nag-aaway kayo, kahit gusto niya nang umabsent. Pero at the end of the year, yung parang in months na natuto siya magbasa, na-realize niya how important yung teachings na sa kanya. That is really very fulfilling and rewarding para sa guro in terms of your profession. Pero the most rewarding part is yung you are being appreciated. Yun ang mas rewarding. Kahit na it's not for the professional lamang. Kasi professional na nangisip.... Para sa mga teachers o para lalo na para sa akin. Lalo na may mga times na pumapasa sila ng board exam. So yung appreciation."

Participant 6

Additionally, participants also mentioned when parents expressed their gratitude to the respondents for the unwavering patience and support they gave to their children just to make them learn. This also gave them a different kind of satisfaction and value as teachers, which in return made them stay committed.

"Tapos, minsan pag may message ang mga magulang. Ma'am, thank you sa, ano, sa one year na pagtuturong sa anak namin. Natuto yung anak ko sa ganito, sa inyo. Sa pagbabasa. Ayan. Yan yung ano, yung masasabi ko na bakit ako nagstay sa teaching.. Dahil sa kanila."

Participant 1

According to Jeffrey (2020), rewards and recognition lead to job satisfaction, retention, and loyalty, which can positively influence the workers' performance. Recognition and appreciation have motivated the teachers effectively and efficiently to boost their morale and productivity despite the many workloads they have to accomplish (Asaari et al. 2019). Moreover, Andrews (2011) affirmed that the teaching profession can be uplifted with teacher educators, school administrators, and governing boards working together to provide recognition for the outstanding teachers in the field. This shows that recognition must be given emphasis for the workforce to be properly motivated in their work, which is very essential to their commitment. This is very helpful and useful among the



teachers in the achievement of their work and ethics as molders and shapers of the future generation since their work is the noblest among all professions.

Theme 5: Heart at Home. The codes connected to husbands, fathers, families, and children are summed up in the fifth and last topic. Family is most likely the reason the respondents stayed and did not seek employment overseas.

Our family is what drives us to work most days. What we want to do is meet their necessities. As noted by Lasin et al. (2023), many OFWs leave the nation in quest of better employment prospects and greater pay, yet their time overseas frequently entails time spent apart from their family and adjusting to new cultures. Together with financial difficulties, they could also battle feelings of loneliness and melancholy. 'Greener pasture' and better lives for their family drew parents in because of the availability of employment options overseas. Not all OFWs are able to take their family with them when they want to work overseas; hence, even if going abroad pays more, it also involves sacrificing.

Respondents said during the interview they are unable to leave the Philippines because their children are still small and no one will look after them. They wanted to grow up next to them.

"I would be a hypocrite if I said that I wasn't tempted to pursue opportunities abroad or elsewhere. Way back 2014, I was ready to be with my husband but an unfortunate event happened. When during my stay and starting the filing of the documents, one of my children got sick, and could not go home right away. My children and my parents were some of the reasons that made me stay. Although I could teach abroad and live with my husband there, not all my kids nor my parents could be living with us. I find it difficult to be far from them and hearing what one of my kids said when we talked about the matter made me think twice and finally consider staying."

Participant 8

"Kung hindi mo alam, may anak ko ngayon mag-aaral pa kaya di ako tumuloy."

Participant 5

"I also consider that opportunity but because my children need my guidance, and no financial support to fulfil-this restricts. And also, I was about to apply for a work abroad because two of my former co-teachers invited me to apply but since I realized that my kids need me while they are growing up, I refrain. Nobody will guide them."

Participant 9

Another respondent also mentioned about a physically handicapped child whom she cannot resist.

"Aside from that situation I had with my eldest. I cannot let him live alone. And his incapability, you know, he's physically handicapped."

Participant 7

One obvious reason the respondents chose to remain rather than work overseas was their children. As to the Social Learning Theory of Bandura as cited in Amuda (2022), parents are needed by their children as they grow up since they teach them social norms, values, and behaviors by watching them. Children who have positive and consistent parental interaction develop appropriate social skills and emotional control. The choice of the respondents to stay rather than seize the chance to travel overseas is supported by this argument. This is also supported by Bowlby's (1958) Attachment Theory, which suggests that children acquire important emotional ties with their caregivers—most especially their parents. According to a different study by Bowlby (1988), kids who had a secure bond with their parents had greater emotional control, social skills, and stress tolerance. In addition, Shonkoff (2000) noted that early social skill development, emotional stability, and healthy brain development depend on parental involvement in their child's upbringing. Keeping their children first in mind, the respondents made the proper choice to stay in light of these research and theories.

On the contrary, everyone is aware of the negative effects of parental absence brought on by migration. OFW parents now have to deal with this fact. Asis and Feranil (2020) note that when parents are absent; their children suffer emotionally, which eventually has a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of the latter. According to Morover, Singh et al. (2016) children's psychology, conduct, lifestyle, and other aspects are impacted by their parents' absence. According to a very well-known study by Botezat and Pfeiffer (2014), children who stay behind when their parents go abroad are more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, and other emotional and mental health issues. The above-described consequences supported respondents' decision to stay with their family despite the attraction of working overseas.



Apart from the children, the marriage will also suffer. Acedera and Yeoh (2020) claim that women frequently felt guilty and ambivalent when they moved out of the house, which was connected to their main identity as homemakers as well as out of their own country. This was confirmed when a participant discussed her connection with her husband, mentioning that they are not yet parents. She refuses to put their marriage in jeopardy in order to travel elsewhere.

"I am always happy with my achievements here in the Philippines. I have no child only a husband. If I will be, go abroad I am afraid what will happen to our relationship. I am not sure if I can bring him there."

Participant 10

These statements of theirs solidify the reason that they will stay in the Philippines because of their family. Teacher respondents are more family-oriented. Although they want to give their family the good life that they deserve, it is worth noting that the presence of parents at home is necessary. Whatever the reasons may be, family must be prioritized because, whatever happens, family will always be there.

Conclusion:

Commitment is a key component of educational success. Teachers equipped with commitment, passion, and enthusiasm will be role models for not only the learners but also for their colleagues. In times when going abroad is the primary way to uplift economic status and give family members a better life, there are still committed teachers who choose to stay. Their commitment to their profession ignites the passion, desire, and motivation within them. Through the lens of the P.E.R.E.Z. Work Commitment Model, it becomes evident that we can conclude that teachers' commitment and their decision to stay in the Philippines are not a singular construct but a blend of various reasons. These varied experiences and reasons include job stability, a sense of purpose in teaching, promotion, job stability, benefits, recognition, reward, and family. This study discovered these reasons through a thorough analysis of the respondents' data.

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