

Journeying to the Margins: A Qualitative Investigation of the Lived Experiences of High School Teachers in Far-Flung Barangays

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Abstract — Far-flung integrated schools present a unique set of challenges that deeply impact the professional and personal lives of high school teachers. Despite facing limited resources, poor infrastructure, and minimal institutional support, many educators find a deep sense of fulfillment in their roles—valuing the opportunity to inspire and educate students in remote and underserved communities. This qualitative study investigated the lived experiences of high school teachers assigned to far-flung integrated schools, focusing on the challenges they face, their coping strategies, and the meanings they attach to their work. Using in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, the study uncovered recurring patterns and themes in the teachers’ narratives. Results revealed that while participants faced complex and multifaceted challenges, they also expressed a profound commitment to education, a strong sense of purpose, and appreciation for the peaceful yet demanding environments in which they teach. Teachers employed various coping mechanisms—ranging from personal resilience and mindset adaptation to reliance on community support. The findings aligned with theoretical perspectives on teacher well-being, resilience, and culturally responsive pedagogy, illustrating the dynamic interaction between individual dispositions and systemic or contextual factors. Ultimately, the study highlights both the strengths and struggles of educators working in marginal contexts and underscores the urgent need for targeted policy interventions, such as mental health support, professional development, and improved access to resources. The resilience and dedication of these teachers demonstrate that with adequate support, quality education in far-flung areas is not only possible but sustainable.

Keywords — *Far-Flung Schools, Lived Experiences, High School Teachers, Qualitative Research, Phenomenology, Rural Education, Teacher Resilience, Coping Strategies, Teacher Well-Being, Culturally Responsive Teaching*

I. Introduction

The Philippine education system faces significant challenges, particularly in rural and remote areas, including poor teacher quality, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to resources (World Bank, 2019). Teachers in far-flung barangays confront unique difficulties such as professional isolation, multi-grade classrooms, and a lack of training and technological

resources (Glover et al., 2016; Kozuh et al., 2016; Hewitt et al., 2017). These factors contribute to teacher stress and hinder educational outcomes.

Culturally responsive teaching has been identified as a crucial approach for enhancing student engagement and achievement in diverse rural settings (Meyer et al., 2017; Gay, 2018; Garcia & Chun, 2016). However, implementing this approach in far-flung areas is complicated by cultural diversity and limited support. Teacher resilience, including traits like self-efficacy, social support, and motivation, plays a vital role in helping educators manage these challenges (Dennis et al., 2018; Tait et al., 2016; Hewitt et al., 2017).

Autonomy and decision-making power are also essential for teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction, yet these are often lacking in remote areas, contributing to burnout (Barrera et al., 2018; Dennis et al., 2018; Hewitt et al., 2017). Despite the crucial role of these factors, there is a scarcity of research focused on high school teachers in far-flung barangays.

The proposed qualitative study aims to fill this gap by exploring the lived experiences of teachers in three remote Philippine barangays. It aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which promotes inclusive and quality education. The study seeks to understand how personal resources, resilience, culturally responsive teaching, and teacher autonomy influence well-being and effectiveness (Klusmann et al., 2016). Findings may guide policy and program development to better support rural teachers and improve educational outcomes.

By using semi-structured interviews, the study will gather in-depth insights from teachers, although it is limited by its focus on teacher perspectives and self-reported data, potentially affected by social desirability bias. Nevertheless, the research is poised to make a meaningful contribution to understanding and addressing the challenges faced by educators in remote Philippine communities.

Literature Review

The section presents articles and studies that have significant bearing to the study on the *Journeying to the Margins: A Qualitative Investigation of the Lived Experiences of High School Teachers in Far-Flung Barangays*. These were organized and compiled to provide relevant information to the study.

Conceptual Literature. High school teachers in far-flung integrated schools encounter distinct challenges that affect their job satisfaction, commitment, and teaching effectiveness. These include limited resources, poor infrastructure, and isolation from support networks (Peralta & Rarugal, 2019), as well as restricted access to professional development (Manzano & Guillermo, 2018).

Their experiences are shaped by both individual beliefs and contextual factors such as school culture and societal influences (Du, Zhang, & Zhang, 2020). Feelings of isolation and disconnection from communities can negatively impact teacher well-being (McLaughlin & Blackburn, 2019). Teacher well-being is crucial, as it influences job satisfaction and retention (Fang & Xu, 2020), while burnout harms student achievement; however, self-efficacy helps buffer against this (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2019).

Resilience plays a key role, with resilient teachers showing more positive attitudes and coping abilities (Gu & Day, 2020). Autonomy is also linked to higher job satisfaction and engagement among rural teachers (Xie & Derakhshan, 2020; Chiang, Han, & Hsu, 2020).

Culturally responsive teaching enhances teacher confidence and relationships with diverse students (Poteat & Spann, 2021). Teachers cope through social support, self-care, and problem-solving strategies (Aguilar & Beverly, 2018), though a lack of control over their environment may lead to burnout (Rabe-Hemp, 2018).

Professional development is critical for improving teaching quality and satisfaction (Li & Shu, 2019), and increased funding for rural educator support is recommended (National Education Association, 2019). Improving teacher quality is essential for narrowing the urban-rural education gap (Sikder & Das, 2018; Egalite et al., 2018).

In conclusion, addressing the complex challenges faced by rural teachers requires enhancing professional development, supporting teacher well-being, building resilience, promoting autonomy, and encouraging culturally responsive practices.

Research Literature. Lived experiences of high school teachers in far-flung barangays reveals that both individual and contextual factors significantly influence their well-being and effectiveness. Common challenges include limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and isolation from peers and communities (Peralta & Rarugal, 2019; McLaughlin & Blackburn, 2019). These factors contribute to stress, job dissatisfaction, and burnout.

To address these issues, several studies highlight the importance of professional development and support programs. Li and Shu (2019) found that professional development opportunities enhance teaching effectiveness and job satisfaction, a recommendation echoed by the National Education Association (2019). Furthermore, building teacher resilience can help educators perceive challenges more positively and maintain motivation (Gu & Day, 2020).

Teacher autonomy is another key factor positively associated with job satisfaction and work engagement in rural areas (Xie & Derakhshan, 2020; Chiang, Han, & Hsu, 2020). Additionally, culturally responsive teaching fosters stronger relationships with students and communities, and boosts teacher confidence in diverse classrooms (Poteat & Spann, 2021).

Despite these strategies, rural teachers continue to face challenges that require effective coping mechanisms. Aguilar and Beverly (2018) reported that teachers engage in self-care, seek social support, and use problem-focused coping strategies. However, limited control over the work environment can still lead to frustration and burnout (Rabe-Hemp, 2018). The school culture, teacher attitudes, and the broader social environment also play crucial roles in shaping teachers' experiences (Du, Zhang, & Zhang, 2020).

To improve educational outcomes in rural areas, enhancing teacher quality remains essential. Sikder and Das (2018) emphasized the importance of investing in teacher quality, while Egalite et al. (2018) argued that such investments can help bridge the achievement gap between rural and urban students.

In conclusion, the reviewed studies underscore the importance of addressing the unique challenges faced by high school teachers in far-flung barangays through supportive policies, enhanced professional development, promotion of autonomy, and implementation of culturally responsive practices. These measures can improve teacher well-being, effectiveness, and ultimately the quality of education in rural areas.

II. Methodology

The section outlines the research methodology for the qualitative study, which includes a description of the research design, the selection of participants, the time and locale of the study, the choice of instruments and their validation, the data collection procedures, and the approach to data analysis.

Research Design. This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design with an exploratory approach to understand the lived experiences of high school teachers in geographically isolated and underserved areas. A purposive sample of 20 teachers with at least five years of experience in far-flung integrated schools was selected. Data collection was primarily conducted through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences openly while focusing on core research themes. Supplementary field notes and observations were used when possible to enrich contextual understanding.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, with data analyzed through a phenomenological process that involved identifying significant statements, deriving meanings, and clustering these into emergent themes. To ensure trustworthiness, the study incorporated member checking, an audit trail, and researcher reflexivity. Ethical protocols such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were rigorously followed.

The study aims to amplify the voices of marginalized educators and generate insights to inform educational policies and support mechanisms for teachers in remote areas.

Participants of the Study. The participants of this study were high school teachers working in far-flung integrated schools during the academic year 2023-2024. These teachers were the primary focus of this research in order to gain a better understanding of their lived experiences, coping strategies, and the impact of individual and contextual factors on their well-being and effectiveness as educators. As teachers working in rural areas, the respondents face unique challenges, including limited access to resources, isolation, and cultural barriers. By exploring the experiences and challenges faced by these teachers, this study could develop policies and programs that could support their well-being and effectiveness as educators, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes in the region.

Measures. The study used a semi-structured interview guide as its main research instrument to gather insights from high school teachers in far-flung integrated schools. The guide included eight open-ended questions focused on the challenges teachers face, their well-being and effectiveness, coping strategies, culturally responsive teaching, and resilience. The goal was to use their responses to inform policies and programs that enhance teacher support and improve educational outcomes in rural areas.

To ensure validity and reliability, the interview guide underwent pilot testing, expert review, and validity testing. These steps helped identify ambiguities, ensured alignment with research objectives, and refined the instrument for more accurate data collection.

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis, consistent with the phenomenological approach, to identify shared patterns and core themes from participants' experiences. Member checking was used to confirm the accuracy of transcripts and interpretations. Transferability was supported through detailed contextual descriptions, while dependability was ensured with an audit trail documenting the research process. Confirmability was maintained through the use of a reflexive journal to manage researcher bias and ensure objectivity.

Procedures. The study began by asking permission to conduct the study in the Schools Division of Calbayog City which was ultimately approved. Afterwards, the in-depth interviews were conducted among the high school teachers in a private and quiet location to ensure confidentiality and minimize distractions. The interview questions were open-ended and were designed to encourage participants to share their experiences, perceptions, and insights related to their work in rural areas. The interviews were conducted in the participants' preferred language, which helped them feel more comfortable and at ease in sharing their experiences. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, allowing for a more accurate and detailed analysis of the data. Additionally, the researcher took field notes during the interviews to capture nonverbal cues and contextual information, such as the physical environment, facial expressions, and body language of the participants. These notes provided valuable context to the interview data and aid in the interpretation and analysis of the results. Overall, this data gathering procedure ensured that the information collected was detailed, accurate, and comprehensive, allowing for a thorough

exploration of the experiences and perspectives of high school teachers in far-flung integrated schools.

Data Processing. For this particular study, thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes in the data collected from the in-depth interviews. This approach allowed a detailed exploration of the data which uncovered patterns and themes that emerge from the participants' experiences. To begin the process, the transcripts were read and reread to identify initial codes, which were labels or tags that summarize and capture the essence of the data. These codes were grouped into categories and themes in order to identify the key issues and ideas that are present in the data. Additionally, member checking was used to validate the findings and ensure that they accurately reflect the participants' experiences. Member checking involved sharing the initial findings with the participants and asking for their feedback, comments, and corrections. This ensured that the findings were valid and reliable and enhances the credibility of the study. By using this data analysis procedure, the data collected from the in-depth interviews were analyzed in a thorough and rigorous manner, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the unique challenges faced by high school teachers in far-flung barangays integrated schools, and the impact of these challenges on their well-being and effectiveness.

Ethical Considerations. To ensure the ethical integrity of this research, several key principles were strictly followed. First, all participation in this study were ensured to be voluntary, emphasizing that the participants had the right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they fully understood the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks or benefits before their involvement.

Confidentiality was also rigorously maintained and no personally identifiable pieces of information were disclosed in any reports or publications resulting from this research. Additionally, the data collected were used solely for research purposes and were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. The study complied with all applicable ethical guidelines and regulations, prioritizing the well-being, privacy, and rights of all respondents throughout the research process.

III. Results and Discussion

The section presents the results of the data taken from the gathered results. The collected data were tabulated, discussed and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools. Implications of the findings were based on the statistical analysis of the results.

Experiences of High School Teachers in Far-flung Schools

This part discusses the themes that reflected the high school teachers' general experiences teaching in far-flung integrated schools. From the information collected, three themes emerged:

Theme 1: A Sense of Fulfillment Despite Challenges. Participants expressed feelings of fulfillment and satisfaction in teaching despite the challenges of remote, difficult terrain and distance. They take pride in contributing to education in underserved areas. This aligns with research highlighting rural teachers' sense of accomplishment despite hardships (Hewitt et al., 2017; McLaughlin & Blackburn, 2019).

Theme 2: Valuing Education and Inspiring Students. Teachers noted the community's strong appreciation for education and the importance of culturally responsive teaching that respects local traditions and values, making learning more relevant and meaningful for students.

Theme 3: A Peaceful yet Challenging Work Environment. The work environment in far-flung schools is described as peaceful but marked by challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited student resources, and occasional stress. Despite these difficulties, the peaceful setting and strong community contribute positively to teacher well-being and effectiveness. This corresponds with research on rural teachers' experiences of isolation, resource scarcity, and the protective effects of community (Glover et al., 2016; Kozuh et al., 2016; Dennis et al., 2018; Hewitt et al., 2017).

The experiences of high school teachers in far-flung integrated schools experience a mix of fulfillment and challenges. They find meaning in their work despite difficult conditions, observe the strong value placed on education within communities, and operate in environments that are peaceful yet lacking in resources. These experiences reflect existing research emphasizing the role of culturally responsive teaching, resilience, and institutional support in enhancing teacher well-being and performance (Dennis et al., 2018; Gay, 2018; Hewitt et al., 2017; Poteat & Spann, 2021). This study deepens understanding of rural teachers' lived experiences in the Philippines and offers insights for policies and programs to better support them and improve rural education quality.

Transportation Experiences of High School Teachers in Far-flung Schools

This part discusses the themes that reflected the high school teachers' transportation experiences in far-flung integrated schools. From the information collected, three themes emerged:

Theme 1: Limited and Challenging Transportation Options. Teachers face significant transportation challenges, relying on motorcycle taxis (habal-habal) and long walks—sometimes up to an hour and a half daily—to reach their schools due to limited or inconsistent transport availability. This aligns with research highlighting rural transportation and infrastructure difficulties for teachers (Hewitt et al., 2017; Kozuh et al., 2016).

Theme 2: Unreliable Transportation and Frequent Delays. Transportation options are often unreliable, with frequent delays caused by poor road conditions and vehicle breakdowns, especially on steep, uneven, or slippery terrain during the rainy season. Sometimes, military trucks are needed for safer travel. These challenges result in hazardous and delayed commutes, consistent with findings on transportation-related difficulties impacting rural teachers' work (Peralta & Rarugal, 2019).

Theme 3: Long and Difficult Commutes. Teachers endure long, physically demanding commutes that can last from over an hour up to four hours, involving motorcycle rides and hiking through tough terrain. These extended travel times reduce valuable teaching hours and affect teachers' well-being. This corresponds with research on the adverse effects of lengthy commutes on rural educators (McLaughlin & Blackburn, 2019; Peralta & Rarugal, 2019).

High school teachers in far-flung integrated schools experience significant transportation challenges, including limited access to reliable transport, frequent delays, and long, physically demanding commutes. These issues often result in lost instructional time and increased physical strain. The findings are consistent with prior research on rural teaching conditions and underscore the urgent need for improved transportation infrastructure and support systems (Hewitt et al., 2017; Kozuh et al., 2016; McLaughlin & Blackburn, 2019; Peralta & Rarugal, 2019). This study enhances understanding of the transportation difficulties faced by teachers in remote Philippine barangays and provides insights for policy development aimed at improving rural education delivery.

Internet Connectivity Experiences of High School Teachers in Far-flung Schools

This part discusses the themes that reflected the high school teachers' internet connectivity experiences in far-flung integrated schools. From the information collected, three themes emerged:

Theme 1: Limited and Unreliable Internet Access. Teachers in far-flung schools experience limited and unstable internet connectivity, worsened by frequent power outages. Internet is often only accessible outside classrooms, forcing teachers to leave their teaching areas. These connectivity issues hinder effective use of online resources. This aligns with research on rural teachers facing internet infrastructure challenges (Hewitt et al., 2017; Li & Shu, 2019).

Theme 2: Impact on Teaching Effectiveness and Student Learning. Limited and unreliable internet disrupts teachers' ability to prepare lessons, access materials, and submit reports. Despite reliance on online resources due to scarce textbooks, connectivity problems impede lesson delivery and student support. This theme corresponds with studies on the negative impact of poor internet on rural teaching and learning (Li & Shu, 2019; Sikder & Das, 2018).

Theme 3: Challenges in Students' Internet Access at Home. Students in far-flung areas face limited and uneven internet access at home, often depending on shared Wi-Fi spots or cell phone ownership. Poor connectivity restricts their ability to complete assignments and research,

contributing to learning disparities. This theme aligns with prior research on rural students' internet access challenges and educational impact (Hewitt et al., 2017; Li & Shu, 2019).

High school teachers in far-flung integrated schools experience limited and unreliable internet connectivity, which negatively affects teaching effectiveness and student learning. Students also face challenges accessing the internet at home, contributing to educational disparities. These findings are consistent with prior research on rural education challenges related to inadequate internet infrastructure (Hewitt et al., 2017; Li & Shu, 2019; Sikder & Das, 2018). This study enhances understanding of connectivity issues in remote Philippine barangays and supports the need for targeted policies and programs to improve infrastructure and educational quality. The results also align with the study's theoretical framework emphasizing how limited resources impact teacher well-being and effectiveness, underscoring the importance of supporting rural educators and learners.

Safety Experiences of High School Teachers in Far-flung Schools

This part discusses the themes that reflected the high school teachers' safety experiences in far-flung integrated schools. From the information collected, three themes emerged:

Theme 1: Presence of Safety Issues and Concerns. Teachers in far-flung schools express serious worries about personal safety due to violent incidents, armed groups like the NPA, poor infrastructure, and limited emergency services. These factors create ongoing fears that affect their well-being during travel and work. This aligns with prior studies on safety risks faced by rural teachers (Dennis et al., 2018; Hewitt et al., 2017).

Theme 2: Varying Perceptions of Safety During Day and Night. Teachers generally feel safe within school premises day and night, helped by military presence and school activities. However, safety concerns persist during travel and outside school hours due to limited supervision and security. This theme corresponds with research on rural teachers' varying safety perceptions and impacts on well-being (McLaughlin & Blackburn, 2019; Peralta & Rarugal, 2019).

Theme 3: Existing Safety Procedures and Measures. Local authorities collaborate with the military and DepEd to enhance security by establishing military camps and providing escorts for teachers during commutes. These measures help mitigate risks when teachers stay vigilant. This theme aligns with studies emphasizing the role of safety protocols in supporting rural teacher well-being and effectiveness (Dennis et al., 2018; Hewitt et al., 2017).

The safety experiences of high school teachers in far-flung integrated schools involve ongoing concerns about personal security, differing perceptions of safety during daytime versus nighttime, and the implementation of safety procedures such as military escorts and local coordination. These findings align with existing research on rural teachers' safety challenges and emphasize the necessity for enhanced safety measures and support systems (Dennis et al., 2018; Hewitt et al., 2017; McLaughlin & Blackburn, 2019; Peralta & Rarugal, 2019). This study deepens

understanding of the safety issues faced by teachers in remote Philippine barangays and can guide policies aimed at improving teacher well-being and effectiveness. The results also reinforce the theoretical framework underscoring how safety concerns impact teacher welfare and highlight the importance of supportive policies for rural educators.

Cooperation Experiences of High School Teachers in Far-flung Schools

This part discusses the themes that reflected the high school teachers' cooperation experiences with parents and barangay officials in far-flung integrated schools. From the information collected, three themes emerged:

Theme 1: Varied Levels of Support and Cooperation. The first theme captures the varying levels of support and cooperation received by teachers from parents and barangay officials. Participants reported mixed experiences regarding community support. While some noted limited or mismanaged financial support from the barangay, others observed positive attitudes toward education despite high adult illiteracy and students' skepticism about its value. Overall, community support exists but is challenged by engagement and communication issues. This theme aligns with previous research that highlights the varied levels of support and cooperation received by rural teachers from parents and community stakeholders (Aguilar & Beverly, 2018; Li & Shu, 2019).

Theme 2: Recognition of the Value of Education. The second theme captures the recognition of the value of education among parents and barangay officials. Participants noted that the community values education, as seen in parents encouraging their children to attend school and feeling inspired by local teachers. However, cultural factors can sometimes influence students' dedication to learning, even though there is an overall appreciation for education's importance. This theme aligns with previous research that highlights the recognition of the value of education among rural communities and the impact on teacher well-being and effectiveness (Hewitt et al., 2017; Meyer et al., 2017).

Theme 3: Parental Involvement in Children's Education. The third theme captures the level of parental involvement in children's education and school activities. Participants highlighted active cooperation and involvement from parents and barangay officials in school matters. Parents, particularly mothers, frequently participate in school events, meetings, and discussions about their children's progress, demonstrating strong engagement in their children's education. This theme aligns with previous research that highlights the importance of parental involvement in children's education and the impact on student achievement and teacher well-being (Epstein et al., 2014; Kimbark & Richardson, 2017).

The cooperation experiences of high school teachers in far-flung integrated schools are characterized by varied levels of support and cooperation from parents and barangay officials, recognition of the value of education, and parental involvement in children's education. These findings align with previous research on the importance of community support and parental

involvement in promoting teacher well-being and effectiveness in rural areas (Aguilar & Beverly, 2018; Epstein et al., 2014; Kimbark & Richardson, 2017; Hewitt et al., 2017; Li & Shu, 2019; Meyer et al., 2017). The study contributes to the understanding of the cooperation experiences of high school teachers in far-flung barangays in the Philippines and can inform policies and programs aimed at promoting community engagement and parental involvement in rural education. Moreover, the findings align with the theoretical framework of the study, highlighting the impact of community support and parental involvement on teacher well-being and effectiveness and the need for policies and programs that foster positive relationships between schools and communities.

Challenges and Coping Strategies of High School Teachers in Far-flung Schools

This part discusses the themes that reflected the high school teachers' challenges and coping strategies in far-flung integrated schools. From the information collected, seven themes emerged:

Theme 1: A Multifaceted Understanding of Challenges. This theme captures the various ways in which teachers understand and define the challenges they face in their roles. It reflects the complex nature of teaching in far-flung areas and the diverse perspectives teachers bring to their work. The participants' inputs are reflected in the extracts that follow.

Subtheme 1.1: Challenges as Opportunities for Growth. Teachers view challenges as chances for personal and professional development. With a positive mindset, obstacles can be transformed into strengths, promoting skill enhancement and resilience. This aligns with Gu and Day's (2020) study, which found that rural teachers who embraced challenges as growth opportunities exhibited greater adaptability and job satisfaction.

Subtheme 1.2: Challenges as Tests of Ability and Motivation. Challenges are seen as measures of a teacher's capability and determination. Overcoming difficulties requires effort, resilience, and intrinsic motivation. This perspective aligns with Xie and Derakhshan's (2020) research, which emphasized the importance of self-efficacy and motivation in navigating challenges in rural teaching contexts.

Subtheme 1.3: Challenges as Part of the Teaching Experience. Teachers accept challenges as inherent to their profession, especially in remote settings. They associate these experiences with professional identity, showing dedication and adaptability despite hardships. This subtheme resonates with Slegers et al.'s (2017) work, which illustrates how teachers integrate the experience of overcoming challenges into their professional self-concept.

Theme 2: Navigating Significant Obstacles in Daily Work. This theme captures the specific challenges that teachers face in their daily work and how they experience them. It highlights the practical difficulties of teaching in far-flung areas and their impact on teachers' professional lives. The participants' inputs are reflected in the extracts that follow.

Subtheme 2.1: Learning Gaps and Student Motivation. Teachers encounter considerable learning disparities among students, especially in core subjects like science and math. Many students lag behind their urban counterparts in both pace and comprehension, requiring teachers to adapt their instructional methods. This subtheme aligns with Peralta and Rarugal's (2019) study, which identified learning gaps as a major concern for teachers in remote Philippine schools.

Subtheme 2.2: Lack of Resources and Infrastructure. Educators face a scarcity of basic teaching materials, inadequate infrastructure, and challenges such as multi-grade classrooms and overcrowding. These conditions force teachers to be highly resourceful. This subtheme corresponds with Manzano and Guillermo's (2018) findings, which emphasized the adverse impact of limited resources and poor infrastructure on rural teaching in the Philippines.

Subtheme 2.3: Personal and Emotional Struggles. Teachers report high levels of stress, frustration, and emotional fatigue stemming from their efforts to meet students' needs despite limited support. While some remain driven by their commitment to education, others feel overwhelmed or inadequate. This subtheme supports Fang and Xu's (2020) research, which highlighted the emotional challenges and well-being issues experienced by rural teachers in China.

Theme 3: Systemic Issues and Lack of Preparation. This theme captures the root causes of the challenges faced by teachers, including systemic issues and inadequate preparation. It highlights the broader contextual factors that contribute to the difficulties experienced by teachers in far-flung areas. The participants' inputs are reflected in the extracts that follow.

Subtheme 3.1: Inadequate Resources and Support from the System. Teachers reported a systemic lack of support, citing insufficient teaching resources, poor infrastructure, and limited access to professional development. These deficiencies hinder effective instruction and teacher well-being. This subtheme aligns with Li and Shu's (2019) findings, which emphasized the need for institutional support and resources to improve rural teaching conditions.

Subtheme 3.2: Policies and Procedures that Hinder Effective Teaching. Participants described how rigid administrative requirements and excessive paperwork detract from instructional time and do not reflect the realities of rural teaching. The lack of flexibility in educational policies was seen as a barrier to effective teaching. This corresponds with Chiang et al.'s (2020) study, which identified inflexible policies as detrimental to teacher autonomy and satisfaction in rural schools.

Subtheme 3.3: Inadequate Preparation from Teacher Training Programs. Teachers expressed that their formal education often failed to prepare them for the specific demands of rural teaching, such as handling multi-grade classrooms or engaging with culturally diverse communities. More context-specific and practical training was deemed necessary. This subtheme supports Poteat and Spann's (2021) research, which emphasized the value of culturally responsive and targeted training for rural teachers.

Theme 4: Coping Through Support and Self-care. This theme captures the strategies and mechanisms that teachers use to cope with the challenges they face, including seeking support and engaging in self-care. It highlights the resilience and adaptability of teachers in far-flung areas. The participants' inputs are reflected in the extracts that follow.

Subtheme 4.1: Seeking Support from Colleagues and Mentors. Participants highlighted the value of collaboration and mentorship, especially for new teachers navigating rural teaching contexts. They shared experiences of motivating each other, exchanging ideas, and receiving guidance from peers, department heads, and school leaders. This subtheme reflects Gu and Day's (2020) findings on the significance of collegial support in fostering teacher resilience in rural China.

Subtheme 4.2: Engaging in Stress-relieving Activities and Hobbies. Teachers reported engaging in personal leisure activities—such as playing mobile games, reading manga, and listening to music—to relieve stress and restore energy. These routines contribute to their work-life balance and emotional well-being. This finding supports Fang and Xu's (2020) study, which emphasized the importance of personal coping mechanisms for maintaining rural teachers' job satisfaction.

Subtheme 4.3: Maintaining a Positive Attitude and Mindset. Maintaining a positive mental outlook was seen as essential for overcoming adversity. Teachers view their work challenges as opportunities for growth and remain focused on their purpose of educating students. This aligns with Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2019) research, which found that positive self-efficacy can buffer against burnout and contribute to sustained teacher motivation.

Theme 5: The Importance of a Supportive Work Environment. This theme captures the importance of a supportive work environment in helping teachers cope with the challenges they face. It emphasizes the role of institutional support in teacher well-being and effectiveness. The participants' inputs are reflected in the extracts that follow.

Subtheme 5.1: Support from the Administration. Participants expressed appreciation for the support provided by school administrators, noting that responsive leadership and open communication help them manage difficulties. Although some mentioned occasional conflicts with school policies, they believed these could be resolved through mutual understanding and adjustment. This subtheme aligns with Xie and Derakhshan's (2020) findings that administrative support significantly contributes to job satisfaction among rural teachers.

Subtheme 5.2: Availability of Support Resources and Mentoring Programs. Teachers acknowledged the presence of structured support systems, such as workshops, training sessions, and mentorship opportunities, which assist them in improving their teaching competencies. These programs play a vital role in professional growth and coping with the demands of rural teaching. This subtheme supports Li and Shu's (2019) research, which emphasized the positive impact of professional development on rural teachers' effectiveness and satisfaction.

Subtheme 5.3: Open Communication Channels for Discussing Issues and Getting Help. Participants noted that open communication platforms—like group chats and direct access to administrators—facilitate timely support and collaboration. These channels encourage transparency and foster a culture of mutual assistance. This observation corresponds with Chiang et al.'s (2020) study, which found that open communication enhances teacher autonomy and job satisfaction in rural settings.

Theme 6: Designing an Ideal Support Program. This theme outlines key components that teachers believe should be included in an effective support program tailored for rural educators, offering valuable insights into improving support systems in far-flung areas.

Subtheme 6.1: Mentorship from Experienced Teachers. Participants emphasized the importance of mentorship from seasoned educators as a source of guidance and knowledge for handling the challenges of rural teaching. Mentorship was seen as a critical support mechanism, offering practical insights and emotional support to less experienced teachers. This aligns with Poteat and Spann's (2021) findings, which demonstrated that mentorship enhances teacher confidence and effectiveness in rural environments.

Subtheme 6.2: Mental Health and Stress Management Resources. Teachers highlighted the necessity of mental health support to address the unique pressures associated with teaching in remote areas, such as isolation, travel difficulties, and environmental stressors. They advocated for counseling services, stress management workshops, and wellness programs to promote overall well-being. This corresponds with Fang and Xu's (2020) research, which underscored the importance of mental health resources in sustaining job satisfaction and teaching efficacy in rural schools.

Subtheme 6.3: Relevant Training and Professional Development Opportunities. Participants called for targeted training and professional development tailored to the realities of rural education, including strategies for multi-grade classrooms, use of technology, and classroom management. They also suggested incorporating retreats or team-building activities to support personal renewal. These views align with Li and Shu's (2019) research, which found that relevant professional development significantly improves both teaching performance and job satisfaction among rural educators.

Theme 7: Mindsets and Practical Tips for Success. This theme encapsulates the mindsets and strategies that contribute to teachers' success and fulfillment in far-flung teaching contexts.

Subtheme 7.1: Embracing Challenges with a Positive Attitude. Participants emphasized the value of maintaining a positive mindset and strong passion for teaching, even amid difficulties such as poor transportation and safety issues. They advised new teachers to stay focused on their purpose of educating children and to view challenges as manageable with the right attitude. This

subtheme aligns with Gu and Day (2020), who found that rural teachers exhibiting resilience were more capable of perceiving challenges positively and maintaining job satisfaction.

Subtheme 7.2: Building Strong Relationships with Students and the Community. Teachers highlighted the importance of connecting deeply with students and the community. They suggested understanding students' backgrounds and participating in local events to build trust and enhance teaching effectiveness. This aligns with Poteat and Spann (2021), who reported that teachers trained in culturally responsive practices developed stronger relationships with students and families and showed greater teaching confidence.

Subtheme 7.3: Continuous Learning and Adaptability. Participants noted that successful rural teachers embrace lifelong learning and adaptability, especially in handling multi-grade classrooms and resource limitations. They encouraged new teachers to stay open to new ideas and refine their skills continuously. This reflects Li and Shu's (2019) findings that professional development opportunities for rural teachers significantly enhance both teaching effectiveness and job satisfaction.

Theme 8: DepEd Interventions for High School Teachers in Far-flung Schools. This theme explores high school teachers' experiences with Department of Education (DepEd) interventions in far-flung integrated schools.

Subtheme 8.1: Limited Resources and Training Provided. Teachers reported that DepEd offers limited resources and training in far-flung schools, which restricts the delivery of authentic learning experiences, such as conducting science laboratory activities. While some resources and specialized training are available, their frequency and reach are inconsistent. This subtheme reflects findings by Li and Shu (2019) and Sikder and Das (2018), who identified how limited support affects teacher effectiveness and well-being in rural contexts.

Subtheme 8.2: Inadequate Support for Rural Teachers' Needs. Participants shared mixed perceptions about DepEd support, with some feeling a lack of recognition and resources—such as the absence of safety hazard allowances—while others acknowledged the presence of targeted training and resources. Still, many agreed that more tailored and consistent support is needed to address the distinct challenges of rural teaching. This aligns with Hewitt et al. (2017) and Li and Shu (2019), who also found that inadequate support undermines rural teachers' well-being and job performance.

Subtheme 8.3: Need for Additional Interventions and Support. Participants emphasized the necessity for more substantial interventions, such as building additional classrooms, providing more hands-on training, and increasing access to essential resources like books, better pay, and internet connectivity. While DepEd initiatives exist, they are not sufficient to fully support teaching effectiveness in far-flung areas. These needs are consistent with findings by Li and Shu (2019) and the National Education Association (2019), who advocate for expanded support to enhance teacher well-being and educational quality in rural schools.

The experiences of high school teachers in far-flung integrated schools with DepEd interventions reveal limited resources and training, inadequate support for rural teachers' unique needs, and a clear demand for additional targeted interventions. These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the challenges rural teachers face and the necessity for specific support to enhance their well-being and effectiveness (Hewitt et al., 2017; Li & Shu, 2019; National Education Association, 2019; Sikder & Das, 2018). This study deepens the understanding of teachers' experiences in remote Philippine barangays and can guide policy and program development to address their particular challenges. The findings align with the study's theoretical framework, emphasizing how limited resources and support affect teacher well-being and performance, underscoring the need for tailored policies that support rural educators.

Furthermore, the complex and multifaceted nature of these teachers' challenges includes learning gaps, resource shortages, and personal struggles, often stemming from systemic issues and inadequate teacher training. Teachers cope by seeking peer support, engaging in stress-relief activities, and maintaining positive attitudes. A supportive work environment—characterized by administrative backing, mentoring, resource availability, and open communication—is vital for helping teachers overcome these difficulties. Teachers also advocate for ideal support programs featuring mentorship, mental health resources, and relevant professional development.

These insights align with the study's theoretical framework, which integrates teacher well-being, resilience, and culturally responsive teaching, illustrating the interplay between individual coping mechanisms and contextual systemic factors shaping teachers' professional experiences. This understanding is critical for informing policies and programs aimed at supporting rural teachers and enhancing educational quality in far-flung areas.

Discussion

This section presents the Summary of Findings and the Recommendation gathered throughout the study in an attempt to discuss information outlined on the Research Problem.

Summary of Findings. The study's findings reveal that high school teachers in far-flung integrated schools experience a sense of fulfillment despite various challenges. They value education and are motivated to inspire their students, working in environments that are generally peaceful but also marked by difficulties such as transportation challenges, limited and unreliable internet access, safety concerns, and varying levels of support from parents and barangay officials. The teachers face numerous obstacles including student learning gaps and motivation issues, inadequate resources and infrastructure, personal and emotional struggles, systemic problems, insufficient preparation from teacher training programs, and limited support and training from the Department of Education tailored to rural needs. To cope, teachers rely on support from colleagues and mentors, engage in stress-relieving activities and hobbies, maintain positive attitudes, utilize available mentoring and support resources, and communicate openly to seek help. They identified the need for ideal support programs featuring mentorship from experienced teachers, mental health

and stress management resources, and relevant professional development opportunities. Successful mindsets and practical strategies emphasized embracing challenges positively, fostering strong relationships with students and the community, and committing to continuous learning and adaptability.

Recommendations. Based on the findings and conclusions, several recommendations are proposed. It is recommended that the Department of Education (DepEd) develop and implement targeted support programs addressing the unique challenges and needs of teachers in far-flung schools. Improvements in infrastructure and resources should be prioritized, including better transportation options, reliable internet connectivity, and adequate teaching materials. Teacher training programs need to be enhanced to better prepare educators for the realities of teaching in remote areas, focusing on practical skills for managing multi-grade classrooms and culturally responsive teaching methods. Establishing a comprehensive mentorship program that pairs experienced teachers with those new to far-flung schools would provide essential guidance and support. Additionally, mental health and stress management resources tailored specifically for teachers in these areas should be developed and implemented. Teachers are encouraged to foster stronger partnerships between schools, local communities, and barangay officials to improve support and enhance the educational experience. Regular assessments of the challenges faced by far-flung teachers should be conducted to ensure support programs remain relevant and effective. Innovative solutions, such as contextualized curricula and technology-assisted learning, should be explored to address student learning gaps and motivational issues. Finally, given the study's limitations, further research is suggested to validate these findings across a wider range of far-flung schools in various regions of the Philippines, including investigations into the long-term impacts of teaching in remote areas on teachers' careers and personal development.

IV. Conclusion

The study's results reveal that high school teachers in far-flung integrated schools face a complex array of challenges affecting both their professional and personal lives. Despite these difficulties, many teachers find fulfillment in their roles and value the chance to inspire and educate students in remote areas. However, inadequate resources, poor infrastructure, and limited support systems—including transportation issues, unreliable internet connectivity, and safety concerns—significantly impede their ability to deliver quality education. Teachers' resilience and coping mechanisms are crucial to their success and well-being, with supportive work environments, administrative backing, and open communication playing vital roles in helping them manage these unique challenges. The study also highlights the necessity of targeted interventions and support programs tailored to the specific needs of far-flung teachers, such as enhanced professional development, mental health resources, and mentorship opportunities. Finally, culturally responsive teaching and active community engagement emerge as essential elements of effective education

in these areas, emphasizing the importance of adapting teaching methods to the local context and fostering strong relationships with students and the community.

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