

Exploring the Whys of Non-Practicing Licensed Professional Teachers in BPO Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of Licensed Professional Teachers (LPTs) in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who opted to work in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry rather than practice teaching. Specifically, it sought to identify the reasons behind their career decision and examine how these reasons affected their personal and professional identities. Employing a qualitative phenomenological research design, data were gathered from purposively selected participants through in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion and were analyzed using Ritchie and Spencer's Framework Analysis. Findings revealed that the decision to work in the BPO industry was shaped by interconnected financial, employment-related, professional, social, and personal factors, including financial and socioeconomic pressures, barriers in teacher recruitment, anticipated burnout, negative work environment and societal perception, career opportunities outside teaching, and personal readiness and motivation. While teaching was still viewed as meaningful, BPO employment was perceived as more accessible, financially responsive, and manageable. The study further found that working outside teaching weakened participants' teaching self-efficacy, created identity uncertainty, and reduced motivation to enter the profession. However, it also helped them develop communication skills, confidence, adaptability, and a broader sense of professional growth. The study concluded that choosing BPO did not necessarily represent a permanent rejection of teaching, but a practical and identity-shaping response to present realities. It was recommended that teacher education institutions and concerned education agencies strengthen post-licensure career guidance, employment assistance, and transition support for LPTs.

Keywords: Licensed Professional Teachers, BPO industry, career decision-making, professional identity, non-practice

INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, becoming a Licensed Professional Teacher (LPT) is commonly associated with the expectation of entering the teaching profession. Passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) formally qualifies an individual to teach and is often viewed as the final step toward classroom practice. However, not all individuals who obtain a professional teaching license proceed to the classroom. Some LPTs choose to work in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry instead of practicing teaching. This situation presents an important concern because these individuals are professionally qualified to teach, yet their actual employment belongs to a different occupational field. It raises questions about the factors that shape their career decisions and how such decisions affect their personal and professional identities as licensed teachers.

The concern over LPTs who do not enter classroom teaching may be understood within the broader issue of teacher workforce participation. UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) emphasized that teacher workforce concerns are shaped not only by the number of qualified teachers, but also by recruitment, support, retention, and working conditions. This suggests that professional qualification alone does not automatically lead to active participation in the profession. Career entry may still be influenced by institutional procedures, workplace realities, available employment opportunities, and the individual's perception of whether teaching is attainable, sustainable, and responsive to present needs.

In the Philippine context, passing the LET does not guarantee immediate employment in schools. Licensed applicants still undergo recruitment, ranking, assessment, documentary evaluation, and appointment processes before they can be hired. DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2023 and DepEd Order No. 020, s. 2024 show that entry into public school teaching involves formal selection procedures and documentary compliance. While these processes are part of institutional hiring standards, they may also create uncertainty among newly licensed teachers, especially when combined with financial pressure, family responsibilities, and the need to secure employment immediately after licensure.

Studies on post-licensure and post-graduation career decisions show that education graduates may pursue non-teaching careers for practical, professional, and personal reasons. Diokno and Erojo (2025) found that the decision not to pursue teaching after graduation may be influenced by the perceived demands of the profession, salary concerns, limited flexibility, and other practical considerations. Similarly, Laher (2024) reported that teacher education graduates may choose non-teaching careers because of competitive income, personal circumstances, career satisfaction, and opportunities for growth. These findings suggest that employment outside teaching should not automatically be interpreted as a rejection of the profession, but may reflect how graduates respond to financial realities, personal goals, and available career opportunities.

Career readiness also plays an important role in post-licensure decision-making. Azhenov et al. (2023) emphasized that career decision-making readiness is linked to students' confidence in making career choices and their ability to evaluate possible career

paths. Liu et al. (2024) similarly highlighted the role of career decision-making self-efficacy in shaping career-related choices. These perspectives are relevant to LPTs who choose BPO employment because having a license may not immediately translate into confidence, readiness, or willingness to enter the classroom. Instead, LPTs may assess where they feel more prepared, capable, and practically situated at a particular point in their lives.

Teaching application realities and hiring perceptions may further influence the career choices of LPTs. Entry into public school teaching may involve ranking, locality and placement considerations, available teaching items, documentary compliance, and waiting periods. Mejia et al. (2025) discussed mechanisms such as local preference, geographic hiring hierarchy, transfer priority, and teacher ranking in relation to teacher hiring. Meanwhile, Yazıcı et al. (2023) found that perceptions of fairness in teacher selection may be associated with procedural justice, interactional justice, examination scores, interview scores, and hiring status. While perceptions of unfairness or favoritism do not necessarily represent formal education policy, they are important because they shape how applicants understand their chances of entering the profession. For newly licensed teachers, the belief that recruitment is difficult, delayed, or affected by factors beyond formal qualification may weaken motivation to pursue teaching immediately.

The BPO industry has become one of the most visible alternative employment options for Filipino graduates. According to the IT and Business Process Association of the Philippines (IBPAP, 2025), the Philippine IT-BPM industry recorded 1.82 million jobs and USD 38 billion in revenue in 2024, showing its continuing role as a major source of employment in the country. For LPTs, BPO employment may appear attractive because of faster hiring, compensation packages, incentives, structured work environments, and opportunities for skill development. Chico et al. (2022) found that compensation practices such as salary, allowances, incentives, benefits, and leave policies were important aspects of employee satisfaction among selected BPO employees. Balolong (2025) also examined human resource management practices and employee commitment in BPO companies, highlighting the structured nature of BPO workplaces. These factors may make BPO employment appear more accessible and financially responsive compared with teaching positions perceived as delayed, demanding, or less immediately sustainable.

BPO employment may also support the development of transferable skills. Miranda and Paglinawan (2025) showed that LPTs may enter non-teaching industries because of financial stability, career opportunities, and the use of transferable skills. Amirudin et al. (2025) emphasized that career adaptability helps individuals respond to changing work conditions, explore career options, and develop confidence in transitions. In this sense, BPO employment should not be viewed only as a fallback option. It may also serve as a career space where LPTs develop communication skills, patience, flexibility, problem-solving ability, emotional control, and confidence. These skills may not be classroom-specific, but they can still contribute to personal and professional growth.

At the same time, the decision to avoid or delay teaching may be influenced by perceptions of teaching work and professional readiness. Although teaching is widely regarded as meaningful and socially valuable, it is also associated with workload demands, emotional strain, administrative tasks, and public expectations. Madigan and Kim (2021) found that burnout and job satisfaction were significant predictors of teachers' intentions to quit, while Zhang et al. (2022) found that burnout was positively associated with turnover intention and job satisfaction was negatively associated with turnover intention. In the local context, Magtalas and Eduvala (2024) found that teachers' workload was related to burnout and work performance. These studies help explain why some LPTs may hesitate to enter teaching when they anticipate emotional exhaustion, heavy paperwork, reduced work-life balance, or difficulty sustaining classroom responsibilities.

Working conditions also shape how teaching is perceived as a career. Toropova et al. (2021) found that teachers' job satisfaction is related to school working conditions, workload, student discipline, teacher cooperation, and perceptions of the teaching profession. Admiraal and Kittelsen Røberg (2023) likewise explained that teachers' job satisfaction is shaped by job demands and job resources, including school climate, collaboration, and professional support. These findings suggest that the decision to pursue teaching is connected not only to passion or licensure, but also to whether the profession is perceived as supportive, manageable, and sustainable. For LPTs who have not yet entered teaching, exposure to practicum experiences, stories from practicing teachers, or observations of workload and public criticism may influence their readiness and motivation to practice the profession.

The decision to work outside teaching may also affect the personal and professional identity of LPTs. Since they are professionally eligible to teach, working in another industry may create tension between their formal title as licensed teachers and their actual work role outside the classroom. Zhao and Zhang (2022) emphasized that teachers' professional identity shapes how they understand their roles, responsibilities, and place within the profession. Pishghadam et al. (2022) similarly explained that teacher identity develops through emotions, experiences, and social contexts. For LPTs working in BPO, the absence of actual classroom practice may weaken their sense of belonging to the teaching profession and may create uncertainty about whether they still see themselves as teachers.

Teacher identity is also connected to practice, competence, and self-efficacy. Shand (2023) emphasized the importance of preparation, practice, reflection, and engagement in building professional teacher identity. Sodergren et al. (2023) examined teacher self-efficacy in areas such as classroom management, instruction, and student engagement, while Almajnuni and Alwerthan (2024) found that effective training programs can enhance teacher self-efficacy in student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. These studies suggest that when LPTs remain outside teaching for a period of time, they may begin to question their competence in lesson planning, classroom management, instructional delivery, and learner engagement. However, working outside teaching may also lead to identity reorientation rather than identity loss. Hogg et al. (2024), Karalis Noel (2021), and LaTronica-Herb and Karalis Noel (2022) show that career movement and departure from teaching involve identity negotiation, agency, balance, and redefinition of the professional self.

This study was guided primarily by Social Cognitive Career Theory, which explains career choice through self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, goals, and environmental supports or barriers (Lent et al., 1994). In this study, SCCT provides a lens for understanding how LPTs compare teaching and BPO employment based on perceived capability, expected outcomes, financial realities, employment access, and confidence in teaching. If teaching is associated with financial uncertainty, delayed entry, heavy responsibilities, or weakened confidence, while BPO work is perceived as accessible, financially responsive, and skill-building, LPTs may develop stronger intentions toward BPO employment.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation also supported the analysis by explaining how employment conditions influence satisfaction and motivation. Hygiene factors such as salary, job security, working conditions, and supervision may affect dissatisfaction, while motivators such as recognition, achievement, responsibility, and professional growth may support career engagement. In this study, LPTs' decision to choose BPO employment may be understood through how they compared the conditions of teaching and BPO work. When teaching was perceived as financially uncertain, emotionally demanding, or less immediately rewarding, while BPO work offered income, incentives, clearer work boundaries, and opportunities for growth, BPO employment became a practical and motivating option.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs further framed the participants' career decisions within broader human needs. The theory suggests that individuals often prioritize basic and security needs before pursuing higher-level needs such as belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. In the context of this study, LPTs' narratives may be understood in relation to financial stability, family responsibilities, emotional readiness, security, recognition, confidence, and self-development. For some participants, the need to meet immediate personal and family obligations may have made BPO employment more practical than entering teaching right away. At the same time, their experiences outside teaching may have influenced their esteem, sense of belonging, and professional identity.

Although existing studies have discussed non-teaching careers, teacher burnout, BPO employment, career adaptability, professional identity, and teacher self-efficacy, limited localized qualitative research has examined the experiences of LPTs in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who chose to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching. This gap is significant because these individuals are professionally licensed to teach, yet they pursued a career path outside the classroom. Their experiences may reveal how post-licensure career decisions are shaped by financial, institutional, professional, social, and personal factors, and how these decisions affect the way they understand themselves as licensed teachers.

Given this context, this study explored the lived experiences of LPTs in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who opted to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What are the reasons why Licensed Professional Teachers opt to work in the BPO industry rather than practice their profession? and (2) How do these reasons affect their personal and professional identities?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of Licensed Professional Teachers (LPTs) in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who opted to work in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry rather than practice teaching. Phenomenology was appropriate because the study sought to understand how the participants interpreted their post-licensure career decisions and how these decisions affected their personal and professional identities (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). Qualitative inquiry was appropriate because the study focused on participants' meanings, experiences, and interpretations within their specific context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The phenomenon examined in this study was the decision of LPTs to work in the BPO industry instead of entering the teaching profession after obtaining their professional teaching license.

The participants of the study were ten LPTs from San Isidro, Davao Oriental who were employed in a BPO company in Davao City rather than practicing teaching. They were selected because they had direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation. To qualify for participation, the participants had to be Licensed Professional Teachers in the Philippines, from San Isidro, Davao Oriental, employed in the BPO industry, and had not entered the teaching profession as classroom teachers after obtaining their license. The study involved two groups of participants: five participated in individual in-depth interviews, while five participated in a focus group discussion. The participants were identified using codes, with IDI1 to IDI5 assigned to in-depth interview participants and FG1 to FG5 assigned to focus group discussion participants to protect their identities.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who could provide rich and relevant information about the phenomenon. This sampling design was appropriate because the study required participants who had personally experienced choosing BPO employment rather than practicing teaching. The use of purposive sampling allowed the researcher to focus on individuals whose experiences were directly aligned with the purpose and research questions of the study.

A validated semi-structured interview guide was used as the primary research instrument. The guide contained open-ended questions that explored the reasons why participants chose BPO employment instead of teaching and how this decision affected their personal and professional identities. The semi-structured format allowed consistency across the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion while giving participants enough freedom to narrate their experiences in detail. Follow-up questions were asked when clarification or deeper explanation was needed. The interview guide was validated by experts to ensure that the questions were clear, relevant, and aligned with the objectives of the study.

Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion. Before data collection, the researcher sought formal permission from the appropriate office or authority and secured the participants’ informed consent. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, the procedures involved, and the measures taken to protect their privacy and confidentiality. They were also informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The researcher conducted one-on-one in-depth interviews with five participants to gather detailed individual accounts of their career decisions, BPO work experiences, perceptions of teaching, and reflections on their personal and professional identities. A focus group discussion was also conducted with five participants to explore shared experiences, collective reflections, and common concerns among LPTs working in the BPO industry rather than practicing teaching. With the participants’ consent, the interviews and focus group discussion were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions included the participants’ original responses in Bisaya, Filipino, English, or mixed language to preserve the authenticity of their voices. English translations were provided to ensure clarity and consistency in analysis while maintaining the meaning and emotional substance of the participants’ narratives.

The data were analyzed using Ritchie and Spencer’s (1994) Framework Analysis. The analysis followed five stages: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation. During familiarization, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the recordings and transcripts to gain an overall understanding of the participants’ experiences. In identifying a thematic framework, significant words, phrases, and statements were coded according to the research questions. During indexing, the thematic framework was applied to the transcripts by assigning relevant responses to appropriate codes and categories. In charting, coded data were organized into matrices to compare recurring patterns across participants. Finally, in mapping and interpretation, the themes were examined in relation to the research questions, theoretical framework, and related literature and studies.

Trustworthiness was observed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, following Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria for qualitative rigor. Credibility was strengthened through methodological triangulation by using both in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion. Direct quotations were also used to support the themes and ensure that the findings remained grounded in the participants’ narratives. Transferability was supported by providing clear descriptions of the participants, setting, and context of the study. Dependability was addressed by documenting the process of coding, categorizing, and developing themes. Confirmability was supported by checking the interpretations against the original transcripts and using participant narratives as evidence for the findings.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the conduct of the study. The study was guided by the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board’s National Ethical Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants (2022). The researcher ensured informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, privacy, fairness, and transparency. Data privacy and confidentiality procedures were aligned with Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, as provided by the National Privacy Commission. Participant codes were used instead of real names in the transcripts, analysis, and presentation of findings. Audio recordings, transcripts, and research files were stored securely and were accessible only to the researcher. Participants were allowed to pause, skip questions, or withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable. The study was conducted in a respectful and non-judgmental manner, recognizing the dignity of LPTs who chose to work outside the teaching profession.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reasons Why LPTs Opted to Work in the BPO Industry Rather than Practice Teaching

To answer the first research question, the participants were asked about the reasons that influenced their decision to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching. Their responses revealed six major themes: financial and socioeconomic pressures, employment barriers in the teaching profession, reality gap and anticipated burnout, negative work environment and societal perception, career opportunities outside teaching, and personal readiness and motivation. These themes show that the participants’ decision was not shaped by a single factor, but by the interaction of financial, institutional, professional, social, and personal considerations.

Table 1 Reasons Why LPTs Opted to Work in the BPO Industry Rather than Practice Teaching

Emergent Themes	Core Ideas	Significant Narratives
Financial and Socioeconomic Pressures	• Low salary in teaching positions • Delayed compensation • Family responsibility and personal needs • Financial practicality and sustainability	“Though teaching is a passion, regardless it’s the bills that talk.” [IDI2] “Kung mag teach ka ug private school, dili jud siya ingon ana kadako ug suweldo.” (If you teach in a private school, the salary is really not that high.) [IDI3]
Employment Barriers in the Teaching Profession	• Backer system and favoritism • Complicated hiring procedures • Requirements for additional qualifications • Delayed employment opportunities	“Backer system gyud.” (The backer system is really a factor.) [IDI3] “Hiring system sa DepEd kay disappointment jud.” (The hiring system in DepEd is really disappointing.) [IDI4]

Reality Gap and Anticipated Burnout	• Gap between expectations and actual teaching experiences • Excessive workload and paperwork • Emotional and physical exhaustion • Difficulty balancing work and personal life	“Actually dili man siya hard, kapoy lang gyud siya.” (Actually, it is not necessarily hard; it is just really exhausting.) [IDI2] “Pag OJT nako, kay nakita nako nga ang work sa teacher dili lang diay about teaching.” (During my OJT, I realized that the work of a teacher is not only about teaching.) [IDI4]
Negative Work Environment and Societal Perception	• Parental pressure and public criticism • High expectations toward teachers • Feeling undervalued and unappreciated • Emotional and social demands of teaching	“Malagot ka kay tao raman pud ang teachers, dili man sila dili kapuyon.” (You become frustrated because teachers are also human; they also become tired.) [FG4] “Karon kay murag ang parents na ang mag buot unsay buhaton sa teachers.” (Nowadays, it feels like the parents are the ones deciding what teachers should do.) [FG5]
Career Opportunities Outside Teaching	• Higher salary and incentives in BPO • More manageable workload • Opportunity for personal and professional growth • Skill development outside teaching	“Training ground pud ang BPO kay ma improve imong communication skills.” (The BPO industry is also a training ground because your communication skills improve.) [FG1] “Aside sa sweldo, naka tabang pud siya sa akua personally kay naka try ko ug new environment ug experiences outside teaching.” (Aside from the salary, it also helped me personally because I was able to try a new environment and experiences outside teaching.) [IDI1]
Personal Readiness and Motivation	• Lack of readiness to teach • Declining motivation or passion for teaching • Self-doubt and uncertainty in pursuing the profession • BPO as a practical or temporary path	“Dili pako ready mag tudlo.” (I am still not ready to teach.) [FG2] “Sa una ganahan kaayo ko mag tudlo pero karon murag natapol nako.” (Before, I really wanted to teach, but now I feel like I already lost the motivation.) [IDI5]

Financial and socioeconomic pressures emerged as one of the key factors that influenced the participants’ decision to work in the BPO industry. Although teaching was still regarded as meaningful and connected to passion, the participants viewed its compensation as insufficient for their immediate needs. IDI2 captured this tension by stating, “Though teaching is a passion, regardless it’s the bills that talk,” while IDI3 explained that private school salary was not enough to sustain personal needs and support the family. These narratives suggest that BPO employment became a practical response to financial responsibility, delayed compensation, and the need for stable income. This finding supports Diokno and Erojo (2025), Laher (2024), Bahilot et al. (2024), and Chico et al. (2022), who emphasized that salary, compensation, employment benefits, and financial practicality influence career decisions and work satisfaction.

Employment barriers in the teaching profession also discouraged participants from pursuing classroom teaching after licensure. They associated teaching entry with documentary requirements, ranking procedures, demonstration teaching, waiting periods, additional qualifications, and perceived reliance on connections. IDI3 stated, “Backer system gyud,” while IDI4 described the hiring system in DepEd as disappointing. These accounts indicate that passing the LET did not automatically lead to employment, as participants still perceived the teaching application process as difficult, delayed, and uncertain. In contrast, BPO employment appeared more accessible because it provided a clearer and faster route to work. This finding relates to Shaoan et al. (2025), James et al. (2022), and Mejia et al. (2025), who discussed how teacher recruitment may be shaped by hiring procedures, timing, placement, locality, and barriers to entry. However, participants’ references to favoritism and the “backer system” are treated as lived perceptions rather than verified institutional findings.

Reality gap and anticipated burnout further shaped the participants’ career decisions. Their expectations of teaching changed after exposure to the actual demands of the profession through OJT, private school experiences, and observations of practicing teachers. Teaching was no longer seen as limited to classroom instruction, but as work involving paperwork, deadlines, lesson planning, classroom management, emotional labor, and responsibilities that extended beyond school hours. IDI2 described teaching as “not necessarily hard” but “really exhausting,” while IDI4 realized during OJT that the work of a teacher was “not only about teaching.” These narratives show that the participants anticipated burnout even before fully entering the profession. This finding is consistent with Magtalas and Eduvala (2024), Wang et al. (2024), and Zhang et al. (2022), who linked workload, emotional exhaustion, burnout, job satisfaction, and turnover intention to teachers’ work experiences.

Negative work environment and societal perception also influenced the participants’ hesitation to enter teaching. Participants perceived teaching as emotionally and socially demanding because of parental pressure, public criticism, high expectations, limited appreciation, and the constant need for patience and emotional control. FG4 emphasized that teachers are also human and become tired, while FG5 observed that parents now seem to influence what teachers should do. These accounts suggest that the participants were not only concerned with workload but also with the emotional exposure and public accountability attached to teaching. Their reluctance to enter the profession was shaped by the perception that teachers are expected to sacrifice heavily while receiving limited recognition and support. This finding connects with Toropova et al. (2021), Admiraal and Kittelsen Røberg (2023), and Ladres and Garcia (2025), who discussed the role of working conditions, job demands, professional support, occupational stress, and burnout in teachers’ satisfaction and professional engagement.

Career opportunities outside teaching made BPO employment more attractive to the participants. The BPO industry was viewed as a practical alternative that offered higher income, incentives, faster hiring, structured work, manageable workload boundaries, and opportunities for skill development. FG1 described BPO as a “training ground” for improving communication skills, while IDI1 shared that BPO work allowed exposure to a new environment and experiences outside teaching. These narratives show that BPO employment was not viewed only as a fallback option; it also became a space for personal growth, confidence-building, adaptability, and professional exploration. This supports Miranda and Paglinawan (2025), Balolong (2025), and Amirudin et al. (2025), who recognized non-teaching work, structured workplaces, transferable skills, and career adaptability as relevant to professional development and career transition.

Personal readiness and motivation also shaped the participants’ decision. Although they were professionally qualified to teach, some participants felt that they were not yet emotionally, psychologically, or professionally ready to enter the classroom. FG2 stated, “Dili pako ready mag tudlo,” while IDI5 shared that although there was once a strong desire to teach, the motivation had weakened over time. For some participants, BPO work functioned as a temporary step while preparing for future teaching opportunities; for others, it became a preferred or more manageable path. This finding suggests that readiness to teach does not automatically follow licensure. Instead, it develops through confidence, motivation, perceived capability, emotional preparedness, and career fit. This aligns with Azhenov et al. (2023), Liu et al. (2024), Pavin Ivanec (2023), and Yurtseven and Dulay (2022), who emphasized the importance of career readiness, self-efficacy, motivation, emotional competence, and career adaptability in shaping career choices.

Overall, the findings show that the participants’ decision to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching was shaped by interconnected financial, institutional, professional, social, and personal factors. Teaching remained meaningful to many participants, but it was also perceived as financially insufficient, difficult to access, emotionally demanding, socially undervalued, and personally overwhelming. In contrast, BPO employment was viewed as more accessible, financially responsive, structured, skill-building, and manageable. Through Social Cognitive Career Theory, the participants’ decision may be understood in relation to self-efficacy, outcome expectations, perceived barriers, and career goals. Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory further explains how salary, working conditions, recognition, and growth opportunities influenced their comparison between teaching and BPO work. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs also helps explain why financial security, family responsibility, stability, psychological well-being, and personal development became central in their career decisions. Thus, choosing BPO employment did not simply represent rejection of teaching, but a practical and identity-shaping response to the participants’ needs, circumstances, and perceived career opportunities after licensure.

Effects of Working in the BPO Industry on the Personal and Professional Identities of LPTs

To answer the second research question, participants were asked how working in the BPO industry affected the way they viewed themselves as Licensed Professional Teachers, how they felt about not practicing teaching, and how their experiences influenced their confidence, motivation, professional goals, and sense of belonging to the teaching profession. Analysis of the data revealed four major themes: declining professional confidence and teaching self-efficacy, professional identity uncertainty, loss of teaching motivation, and identity reorientation outside teaching.

Table 2 Effects of Working in the BPO Industry on the Personal and Professional Identities of LPTs

Emergent Themes	Core Ideas	Significant Narratives
Declining Professional Confidence and Teaching Self-Efficacy	- Self-doubt in teaching abilities - Fear of returning to teaching - Perceived decline in teaching competence - Loss of confidence due to non-practice	“Nawala akong salig sa sarili.” (I lost confidence in myself.) [IDI3] “Naga self doubt nako kung makaya paba nako ug tudlo.” (I already experience self-doubt if I can still teach.) [FG2]
Professional Identity Uncertainty	- Feeling disconnected from the teaching profession - Perception of wasted education and license - Loss of professional recognition - Uncertainty about professional identity	“Lahi man gyud pag dili nimo ma practice imong profession.” (It is really different when you are unable to practice your profession.) [IDI3] “Murag ma expire nalang akong lisensya nga wala gyud nagamit.” (It feels like my license might expire without ever being used.) [IDI2]
Loss of Teaching Motivation	- Gradual loss of passion for teaching - Discouragement due to the teaching system - Emotional exhaustion and frustration - Reduced interest in pursuing teaching	“Niaabot sa akoa nga murag dili nalang ko mag tudlo tungod sa sistema sa teaching profession.” (There came a point where I felt like I no longer wanted to teach because of the system in the teaching profession.) [IDI1] “Loss motivation to teach labaw na tungod sa backer system.” (I lost motivation to teach especially because of the backer system.) [IDI3]
Identity Reorientation Outside Teaching	- Personal growth outside teaching - Development of communication and interpersonal skills - Recognition of opportunities beyond the profession - Redefinition of career priorities and goals	“Murag naka realize ko nga naa pud diay koy mahimo ug ma develop outside sa teaching profession.” (I realized that I can also do and develop something outside the teaching profession.) [IDI1] “Self growth kay miski asa ka ibutang, naa man jud gihapon kay ma learn.” (It contributed to my self-growth because wherever you are placed, you still learn something.) [IDI4]

Declining professional confidence and teaching self-efficacy emerged as one of the major effects of working in the BPO industry rather than practicing teaching. Although the participants remained Licensed Professional Teachers, prolonged non-practice made some of them question whether they could still perform teaching-related tasks such as lesson planning, classroom management, instructional delivery, learner engagement, and emotional regulation. IDI3 stated, “Nawala akong salig sa sarili,” while FG2 shared that self-doubt developed regarding whether teaching was still manageable. These accounts suggest that licensure alone did not sustain professional confidence when teaching skills were not actively practiced. This finding is supported by Sodergren et al. (2023), Almajnuni and Alwerthan (2024), and Muamaroh and Thoyibi (2025), who emphasized the importance of teacher self-efficacy in classroom management, instruction, student engagement, and professional confidence.

Professional identity uncertainty also shaped the participants’ experiences. Working in the BPO industry while holding a teaching license created tension between their formal identity as LPTs and their actual occupational role outside the classroom. Participants expressed feelings of disconnection, sadness, and uncertainty because their degree and license were not being used in the expected professional field. IDI3 explained that it feels different when one is unable to practice the profession, while IDI2 described the fear that the license might expire without ever being used. These narratives show that professional identity was affected not only by personal feelings, but also by social comparison, public expectations, and the perceived loss of recognition attached to being called “ma’am” or “sir.” This finding aligns with Zhao and Zhang (2022), Pishghadam et al. (2022), and Shand (2023), who explained that teacher professional identity is shaped by professional experience, social context, practice, and engagement with teaching-related roles.

Loss of teaching motivation emerged as another effect of non-practice and BPO employment. Some participants explained that their desire to teach gradually weakened because of discouraging perceptions of the teaching system, fear of returning to the classroom, lack of practice, and self-doubt. IDI1 shared that there came a point when teaching no longer felt desirable because of the system in the teaching profession, while IDI3 directly connected the loss of motivation to the perceived backer system. These accounts suggest that motivation to teach did not disappear all at once; rather, it declined over time as participants became more distant from classroom practice and more aware of the barriers and demands associated with teaching. This finding relates to Oliveira et al. (2023), Tan and Kim (2024), Hellebaut et al. (2023), and Madigan and Kim (2021), who discussed how motivation, burnout, satisfaction, and professional conditions influence teachers’ engagement with the profession.

Identity reorientation outside teaching showed that the participants’ experiences were not entirely negative. While working in BPO created uncertainty and self-doubt for some, it also allowed participants to recognize growth, develop transferable skills, and redefine their sense of professional worth beyond teaching. IDI1 realized that there were still abilities and opportunities to develop outside the teaching profession, while IDI4 described the experience as self-growth because learning can happen in any work setting. These narratives suggest that BPO employment became a space for communication development, confidence-building, adaptability, independence, and career exploration. This finding connects with Karalis Noel (2021), Suarez and McGrath (2022), Hogg et al. (2024), and LaTronica-Herb and Karalis Noel (2022), who emphasized that professional identity may involve tension, transition, agency, and redefinition when individuals move between or away from teaching-related roles.

Overall, the findings show that working in the BPO industry affected the participants’ personal and professional identities in complex ways. On one hand, non-practice weakened some aspects of their teacher identity, particularly their confidence, motivation, and sense of belonging to the teaching profession. On the other hand, BPO employment allowed them to develop new skills, recognize alternative forms of growth, and redefine their professional identity beyond the classroom. Through Social Cognitive Career Theory, these experiences may be understood through changing self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and environmental conditions. Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory helps explain how recognition, working conditions, growth, and dissatisfaction influenced the participants’ identity experiences. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs further explains how security, belonging, esteem, confidence, and self-development shaped how participants understood themselves as LPTs working outside teaching. Thus, the effect of BPO employment was not simply identity loss, but an ongoing process of identity negotiation between the teacher they were licensed to become and the professional they were becoming in another field.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the lived experiences of Licensed Professional Teachers in San Isidro, Davao Oriental who opted to work in the BPO industry rather than practice teaching. The findings revealed that their decision was shaped by interconnected financial, institutional, professional, social, and personal factors. Financial and socioeconomic pressures strongly influenced their choices, particularly because BPO employment was perceived as more responsive to immediate income needs, family responsibilities, and financial stability. Employment barriers in the teaching profession, such as complicated application procedures, delayed opportunities, additional qualification expectations, and perceived unfairness in recruitment, also made teaching appear less accessible despite licensure.

The findings also showed that the participants’ perceptions of teaching were shaped by the reality gap between their expectations and the actual demands of the profession. Teaching was viewed as meaningful, but it was also associated with heavy workload, paperwork, emotional exhaustion, limited work-life balance, parental pressure, public criticism, and societal expectations. In contrast, the BPO industry was perceived as a more accessible and practical alternative because it offered faster employment, higher income, structured work, incentives, and opportunities for skill development. Thus, the participants’ decision to work in BPO did

not simply represent rejection of teaching, but a practical response to their needs, circumstances, and perceived career opportunities after licensure.

The study further revealed that working in the BPO industry affected the participants' personal and professional identities. Some participants experienced declining professional confidence and teaching self-efficacy, particularly in relation to lesson planning, classroom management, instructional delivery, and learner engagement. Others experienced professional identity uncertainty because they remained licensed teachers but were not practicing in the classroom. Their motivation to teach also weakened over time due to non-practice, fear, self-doubt, and discouraging perceptions of the teaching profession. However, the findings also showed that BPO employment contributed to identity reorientation by helping participants develop communication skills, confidence, patience, adaptability, independence, and a broader understanding of professional growth outside teaching.

Overall, the findings suggest that the professional identity of LPTs is not fixed by licensure alone. It continues to be shaped by actual practice, work experiences, social expectations, personal readiness, and available career opportunities. While non-practice may weaken confidence, motivation, and sense of belonging to the teaching profession, employment outside teaching may also provide opportunities for growth and identity reconstruction. Therefore, LPTs working in the BPO industry should not be viewed simply as professionals who abandoned teaching, but as individuals negotiating their career choices, personal needs, and professional identities within complex economic and institutional realities.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings imply that passing the LET does not automatically lead to teaching practice, especially when newly licensed teachers face urgent financial needs, family responsibilities, and uncertainty in accessing teaching positions. Teacher education institutions may strengthen post-licensure career guidance programs that prepare graduates not only for licensure, but also for actual entry into the teaching profession. These programs may include orientations on teaching employment processes, ranking procedures, documentary requirements, classroom readiness, career decision-making, and professional identity development.

The study also implies that some LPTs hesitate to enter teaching because the profession is perceived as demanding, uncertain, and emotionally exhausting. Schools, teacher education institutions, and relevant education agencies may provide clearer and more accessible information about application requirements, hiring procedures, and teaching preparation. These may be presented through infographics, orientation sessions, multimedia materials, or post-licensure support programs to help LPTs make informed career decisions after passing the LET.

For LPTs working outside teaching who may still consider entering the profession, preparatory support programs may be developed. These may include refresher sessions on lesson planning, classroom management, instructional strategies, learner engagement, and confidence-building. Such programs may help reduce fear, self-doubt, and perceived loss of competence among LPTs who have been away from classroom practice for some time.

The findings further imply that work outside teaching should not automatically be viewed as professional failure. BPO employment helped participants develop transferable skills such as communication, patience, adaptability, emotional regulation, confidence, and independence. Guidance counselors and career advisers may help LPTs process career uncertainty, recognize the value of skills gained outside teaching, and clarify whether they wish to return to teaching or continue developing in another career path.

Finally, the study highlights the importance of understanding professional identity as a continuing process. LPTs who work outside teaching may experience identity tension, but they may also reconstruct their identity through new work experiences and personal growth. Teacher education institutions and career support providers may therefore include professional identity reflection in career guidance programs, especially for graduates who are uncertain about entering or returning to the teaching profession.

Limitations And Future Research

This study was limited to ten Licensed Professional Teachers from San Isidro, Davao Oriental who were employed in the BPO industry rather than practicing teaching. Since the study used a qualitative phenomenological design, the findings focused on the participants' lived experiences and should not be generalized to all LPTs or all education graduates. The study also relied on self-reported narratives from in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion, which means that the findings were based on the participants' personal reflections, perceptions, and interpretations of their career decisions.

Future researchers may conduct similar studies in other municipalities, provinces, or regions to examine whether LPTs in other contexts share similar experiences. Quantitative or mixed-method studies may also be conducted to determine the prevalence, patterns, and predictors of LPTs choosing BPO employment or other non-teaching careers after licensure. Further research may also explore the experiences of LPTs who eventually return to teaching after working in non-teaching industries, particularly in relation to confidence rebuilding, professional identity, and classroom readiness.

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