

Lived Experiences of Filipino Teachers in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

This study used a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of Filipino teachers in Taiwan. Specifically, it focused on five major themes: challenges encountered, coping mechanisms, resilience, insights gained, and recommended support programs. The study involved 15 Filipino teachers assigned to Taichung City under the Teach Taiwan program. The study covered the experiences of Filipino teachers during the school years 2024–2026. The participants were selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through individually conducted semi-structured interviews via Google Meet. The collected data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings revealed that Filipino teachers in Taiwan encountered challenges both at work and outside work. The most encountered challenge was the language barrier. Other challenges encountered included adjusting to the work culture, student proficiency gaps, co-teaching concerns, daily communication difficulties, homesickness, and adjusting to essential services and social life. To cope with these challenges, Filipino teachers used social support, self-regulation, self-care, and healthy routines. Their resilience was strengthened by family motivation, financial goals, opportunities, and future aspirations. The study further showed that their experiences contributed to adaptability, independence, cultural understanding, patience, and professional growth. Based on the findings, the study concluded that Filipino teachers in Taiwan need comprehensive support, including language assistance, mental health support, stronger community networks, and cultural orientation programs, to enhance their well-being, adjustment, and teaching performance.

Keywords: lived experiences, challenges encountered, coping mechanisms, resilience, insights, support programs

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Taiwan's Ministry of Education (MOE) has launched its own Foreign English Teacher Program. The MOE has made strong efforts to attract foreign English teachers. Under its bilingual nation by 2030 program, the MOE now includes Filipino teachers as qualified to teach in Taiwan. Previously, the Philippines was not among the seven countries whose citizens were eligible for teaching posts. The program originally targeted applicants from these seven English-speaking countries: the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa (TFETP, 2025).

Taiwan recently opened its doors to Filipino teachers for its new curriculum and bilingual education goals. In spring 2022, the first group of Filipino English teachers arrived in Taiwan (Taipei Times, 2022). The MOE launched the program in 2022 with 77 Filipino English teachers and another 11 Filipino English teaching assistants (MOE, 2022). Currently, the number of Filipino English teachers in Taiwan is not yet broken down in the MOE public data. Many Filipino teachers were recruited for this program operating in Taiwan without a proper understanding of the risks involved. For many, working overseas may seem simple, but if you have no idea what teaching abroad is like, the harsh reality is very different from those assumptions.

Although Filipino teachers abroad are common worldwide, their experiences in Taiwan remain underexplored, particularly within the Teach Taiwan Program. Most studies do not focus on teachers' lived experiences or the specific challenges they encountered while working in Taiwan. Existing research has examined specific

aspects of Filipino teachers' experiences, such as their motivation to work in Taiwan (Fabella & Campos, 2022) and education management strategies among Filipino foreign teachers in Taiwanese classrooms (Lao & Espiritu, 2025). While these studies provide valuable insights, limited attention has been given to the broader lived experiences of Filipino teachers specifically under the Teach Taiwan Program, particularly how they experience and respond to both work-related and daily-life challenges. Studies conducted in other international contexts provide useful comparisons with the experiences of Filipino teachers in Taiwan. Cahilog et al. (2023) found that Filipino public school teachers sought overseas employment because of low salaries, limited career growth, and the desire for better living conditions. Despite the emotional difficulties associated with working abroad, the financial and professional benefits were viewed as important reasons for pursuing international employment. Similarly, Real and Flordeliz (2024), in their phenomenological study of Filipino teachers working in various countries, highlighted the professional and cultural adjustments experienced by teachers abroad, as well as the resilience and coping strategies they developed while adapting to foreign educational systems. These studies demonstrate that Filipino teachers working internationally experience professional, personal, and cultural challenges. However, the broader lived experiences of Filipino teachers specifically under the Teach Taiwan Program, including how they cope with work-related and daily-life challenges, develop resilience, and gain insights from their experiences, remain insufficiently explored. This study addresses this gap.

The objective of this study is to understand and explore the unique challenges teachers face in Taiwan. It aims to examine how they cope with their challenges, the resilience they have developed, and the insights they gain while teaching in Taiwan, and to recommend a support program based on the study's findings. The study is expected to benefit Filipino teachers as well as stakeholders involved in the Teach Taiwan Program, including school administrators, the Ministry of Education, educational policymakers, teacher training institutions, students, and future researchers. It also contributes to the improvement of Taiwan's Bilingual Nation 2030 policy by providing insights into the actual experiences of Filipino teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore and understand the lived experiences of Filipino teachers in Taiwan. A phenomenological approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand how participants experienced and made sense of the challenges associated with living and teaching in Taiwan. Phenomenological inquiry focuses on describing and interpreting participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). The phenomenological design guided the study's focus on participants' lived experiences, while RTA was used to identify and interpret recurring patterns of meaning across their accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2024). Together, these approaches enabled an in-depth examination of the challenges encountered by Filipino teachers, their coping mechanisms and resilience, the insights they gained, and their perceived support needs while working and living in Taiwan.

Participants and Sampling

The study involved 15 Filipino teachers working in Taichung City, Taiwan, under the Teach Taiwan Program during the 2024–2026 school years. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research to select individuals with direct and relevant experience of the phenomenon under study (Tajik et al., 2025). Participants met the following inclusion criteria: they were Filipino foreign English teachers, had at least two years of teaching experience in Taiwan, were affiliated with the Teach Taiwan Program, and were assigned to schools in Taichung City. Of the 15 participants, 11 taught at the elementary level, 3 at the junior high school level, and 1 at both levels.

Participants were recruited through online groups of Filipino educators under the Teach Taiwan Program and through professional networks. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate and provided informed

consent before the interviews. To protect confidentiality, participants' identities and school names were not disclosed. Given the qualitative and context-specific nature of the study, the findings are limited to the experiences of these 15 participants and may not represent the experiences of all Filipino teachers in Taiwan. Future studies may include Filipino teachers from other cities or regions in Taiwan to provide broader perspectives on their lived experiences.

Data Gathering Instrument

This study used a semi-structured interview guide to gather data on the lived experiences of Filipino teachers in Taiwan. The interview guide consisted of two parts. Part I included three demographic questions to describe the participants' backgrounds. Part II consisted of 10 open-ended questions designed to explore the challenges participants encountered at work and outside work, how they coped with these challenges, their sources of motivation and resilience, the lessons and insights they gained from teaching and living abroad, and the support or programs they believed could help Filipino teachers adjust better while working and living in Taiwan. The semi-structured format allowed participants to freely describe their experiences and perspectives while ensuring that the interviews consistently addressed the main areas of the study.

Trustworthiness and Credibility of the Study

The trustworthiness and credibility of this qualitative study were strengthened through expert review and member checking. The instrument was subjected to validation by three experts in the field of education, particularly those with master's and doctoral degrees, for content validation to guarantee that the instrument measures what is intended to measure. They critiqued the items and suggested improvements and ensured that the questions were relevant, clear, and aligned with the study's focus on the lived experiences of Filipino teachers in Taiwan. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, member checking was conducted. After the initial analysis and development of themes, all participants were allowed to review the summaries of their interview responses and the interpretations of the emerging themes. They were invited to confirm whether the findings accurately reflected their experiences and to provide clarification when necessary. Their feedback was considered in refining the interpretation of the data to ensure that the findings faithfully represented their lived experiences.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data for this study were collected through private online interviews with Filipino teachers currently teaching in Taichung, Taiwan, under the Teach Taiwan Program. The researcher contacted participants directly through private messages or personal communication. The researcher is also a Filipino teacher currently working in Taichung City, Taiwan, under the Teach Taiwan Program; however, the researcher was not included as a participant in the study. Her role was limited to conducting the research and analyzing the participants' accounts. Her experience as a practitioner provided firsthand knowledge of the research setting and helped establish rapport, trust, and open communication with the participants during the interviews. To address potential researcher bias, the researcher maintained reflexive awareness throughout the data collection and analysis processes by consistently following the semi-structured interview guide, allowing participants to freely express their experiences, and ensuring that the analysis remained grounded in the participants' accounts. The researcher also practiced bracketing (*epoché*) by consciously reflecting on and setting aside, as much as possible, her personal experiences, assumptions, and expectations throughout the data collection and analysis processes.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on those willing to share their teaching experiences in Taiwan. Each participant was given a consent form and informed about the study's purpose. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted online via Google Meet, based on the participants' availability and preferences. Each session lasted approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The questions were open-ended to allow the participants to express their thoughts and share their experiences freely. With permission, the interviews were screen-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. To identify common themes related to the challenges, coping mechanisms, resilience, insights, and support needs of Filipino teachers in Taiwan, reflexive thematic analysis was used. Although the semi-structured interviews generated data sufficient to address the research

questions, the relatively short interview duration of approximately 10 to 15 minutes may have limited opportunities for deeper exploration of some participants' lived experiences. Future studies may employ longer interview sessions and conduct follow-up interviews to allow participants to elaborate further on their experiences and provide richer and more detailed narratives.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data gathered through the semi-structured online interviews were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). Reflexive thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2024). It was appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to examine recurring experiences of Filipino teachers in Taiwan, including the challenges they encounter, coping mechanisms, resilience, insights gained, and recommended support programs.

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were read repeatedly to facilitate familiarization with the data and identify initial ideas. Coding and theme development were conducted iteratively, following the six-phase process of reflexive thematic analysis:

1. Data familiarization. Transcripts were created by listening to the recorded interviews and writing down the participants' responses. The transcripts were checked several times for correctness. Initial observations were noted in reflections and notes.
2. Coding. Meaningful statements relevant to the research questions were labeled or coded, and similar codes were compiled across participants. Responses from the demographic section were organized and presented in a table to describe the participants' background and provide context for the qualitative findings.
3. Generating themes. Related codes were grouped to form tentative themes reflecting shared patterns in participants' lived experiences.
4. Reviewing themes. Themes were checked again with the codes and transcripts to make sure they accurately reflected the participants' responses.
5. Defining and naming themes. Each theme was refined and clearly described, and sub-themes were created when needed to organize detailed patterns under major themes.
6. Writing the report. The themes were written and explained in paragraph form. Selected statements from the participants were included to support each theme and answer the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Challenges Encountered

The findings revealed that Filipino teachers in Taiwan experienced challenges both at work and outside of work.

Subtheme 1.1. Challenges Encountered at Work

The most common challenge reported by the participants was the language barrier. Many teachers experienced difficulty communicating with students, co-teachers, and school staff due to limited Mandarin proficiency. This made it challenging to give instructions, explain lessons, and manage classroom interactions.

“One of the biggest challenges I’ve faced while working in Taiwan as a Filipino is the language barrier. It’s difficult to communicate, especially at school... There are times when I want to express myself clearly or give instructions, but the language difference makes it challenging.”

— Participant 8

Work culture adjustment was also identified as a challenge. Participants explained that Taiwanese workplace

practices differed from those in the Philippines, requiring them to adapt to new teaching systems, communication styles, and professional expectations.

“...one of the biggest challenges I faced was adjusting to cultural... In my workplace in my school, I had to adapt to different teaching expectations, and communication styles, and professional practices. We don’t share the same practices in the Philippines and in Taiwan.”

— Participant 2

Another challenge is related to student proficiency gaps. The wide range of English ability among students made it difficult for teachers to design lessons that were appropriate for both advanced and beginner learners.

“With the students, the challenge is the huge gap between their proficiency levels. Some kids are really advanced because they have the privilege to go to cram schools, while some kids are really low.”

— Participant 7

Participants also reported challenges with co-teaching concerns. Some participants reported difficulties collaborating with local teachers because of differences in teaching styles, communication practices, and expectations in the classroom.

“Like most foreign teachers here, the co-teaching setup was my main dilemma. I am used to being a strict teacher back in the Philippines. Sadly, my first co-teacher did not meet my expectations. She was very relaxed to the point of distracting the whole class.”

— Participant 10

Overall, the findings show that Filipino teachers' work-related challenges involve not only language barriers but also adjustment to different workplace practices, student proficiency levels, and co-teaching arrangements. These findings support Yi et al. (2020), who identified language difficulties as a major challenge in foreign teachers' cultural adaptation. They also align with Golis (2025), who noted that foreign teachers may experience difficulties related to school practices, collaboration, and workplace expectations. These findings suggest the need for stronger institutional support, particularly in language assistance, workplace orientation, mixed-ability teaching preparation, and clearer co-teaching coordination, so that Filipino teachers can adjust more effectively and perform their roles with greater confidence and efficiency.

Subtheme 1.2. Challenges Encountered Outside of Work

Daily communication difficulties were the most common challenge. Limited Mandarin skills made simple tasks such as ordering food, shopping, or asking for directions difficult.

“Outside of work, daily communication can be difficult due to my limited Mandarin ability. Though I have maximized the use of Google Translate, however sometimes It will fail you... You can only imagine the struggle stepping outside and interacting with locals who don’t really speak the English language...”

— Participant 3

Navigating essential daily services was another challenge experienced by the participants. Many found it difficult to access hospitals, government offices, transportation, and other important services because these were primarily conducted in Mandarin.

“Transportation is also challenging, and I used to feel afraid to ask for help because I worried people might not understand me.”

— Participant 5

Homesickness was another challenge experienced by some participants, especially during their first year of living abroad. Being away from family members created emotional struggles for several teachers.

“During my initial year, homesickness hit me, but as years go by, I toughen myself up and focus on my goal.”

— Participant 13

Cultural and social adjustment was another challenge identified by the participants. They had to adapt to different cultural practices, social norms, and ways of interacting with local people while building relationships in a new environment.

“Having a deeper connection with the locals, that's the thing that I struggle the most.”

— Participant 4

Overall, these findings show that the challenges experienced by Filipino teachers extended beyond the workplace and affected their adjustment to everyday life in Taiwan. The findings support Yi et al. (2020), who identified language and cultural adaptation as important challenges among foreign teachers. They are also consistent with Hack-Polay (2021), who emphasized homesickness among expatriates, and Kuan et al. (2020), who reported that migrants in Taiwan may encounter language and information barriers when accessing essential services. These findings suggest that challenges outside work may significantly influence Filipino teachers' overall adjustment, well-being, and ability to function confidently in Taiwan, pointing to the need for stronger support in language assistance, cultural orientation, and daily living guidance.

Subtheme 1.3. Effects of Challenges on Teaching Performance and Well-being

Filipino teachers in Taiwan experienced challenges that affected both their teaching performance and overall well-being. Emotional and psychological strain was the most common effect, resulting in stress, self-doubt, frustration, and adjustment difficulties.

“At first, these challenges had an impact on my confidence and my emotional well-being... mainly because of the stress due to adjusting to the new environment and feelings of isolation.”

— Participant 2

Professional and personal development also emerged as an important effect. Despite the challenges they encountered, many participants became more resilient, adaptable, and resourceful, leading to improved teaching practices and personal growth.

“These challenges pushed me to improve both professionally and personally... I started using more games, rewards, and TPR... and grew more independent.”

— Participant 5

Instructional and communication difficulties negatively affected classroom instruction, making it difficult for teachers to communicate effectively with students and co-teachers, deliver lessons clearly, and address students' varying levels of English proficiency.

“These challenges greatly affect my teaching, especially when preparing effective lessons. There are times when I prepare engaging activities, but lower-level students struggle to understand them.”

— Participant 1

Increased workload and planning difficulties required teachers to devote additional time and effort to lesson preparation, classroom management, and planning, often extending into their personal time and rest days.

“...if I simplify the tasks too much, higher-level students tend to get bored. This situation can be mentally exhausting and requires extra effort to balance both groups.”

— Participant 1

Overall, these findings show that the challenges experienced by Filipino teachers affected both their teaching performance and personal well-being. Language barriers, differences in student proficiency, adjustment demands, and workload contributed to emotional strain and instructional difficulties. However, these challenges also encouraged some teachers to become more adaptable, resilient, reflective, and resourceful. This

finding is consistent with Fuentes-Vilugrón et al. (2024), who highlighted the effects of emotional and communication difficulties on teachers, and with Taşdemir (2022) and Sheridan et al. (2022), who showed that challenging teaching experiences can also contribute to professional growth and adaptability. Thus, the findings suggest the importance of providing adequate professional and emotional support to help Filipino teachers manage work demands while maintaining their teaching effectiveness and well-being.

Viewed through the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, these findings indicate that language barriers, differences in student proficiency, workload, workplace adjustment, and cultural adaptation function as job demands that require sustained effort from Filipino teachers. When these demands are accompanied by limited resources or support, they may contribute to emotional strain and difficulties in teaching and daily life. Conversely, professional, social, and institutional resources may help teachers manage these demands more effectively. This suggests that balancing job demands with adequate resources is important for supporting teachers' adjustment, well-being, and teaching effectiveness.

Theme 2: Coping Mechanisms

The participants used several coping strategies to manage the challenges they experienced while living and working in Taiwan.

Subtheme 2.1. Immediate Coping Responses

Seeking help and social support was the most common immediate coping response. Participants relied on co-teachers, colleagues, supervisors, coordinators, family members, friends, and local people for guidance, reassurance, and assistance in managing both work-related and daily life challenges.

“First, I ask for the help of my academic chief. And then also my Teach Taiwan coordinator because he’s supposed to be my buddy here. Also, I have to ask help from my local co-teachers, my partner teachers.”

— Participant 14

Reflection and self-regulation also helped participants cope with challenges. Many teachers managed stress by pausing, reflecting on their experiences, calming themselves, regulating their emotions, learning from difficult situations, and taking time in solitude before responding.

“As a very introverted person I pause, I Pause I I’m silent and then I reflect I think about what I if I’m having a hard time Or I’m having a rough day I would just think about the things that I did on that day and maybe put myself in the shoes of someone... I want to manage things by myself all the time.”

— Participant 7

Emotional release and self-care activities served as another important coping response. Participants managed stress through exercise, recreational activities, art, hiking, stress eating, deep breathing, prayer, and other self-care practices that helped restore their emotional well-being and maintain balance while living and working in Taiwan.

“Well, there are a lot of recreational things in Taiwan. So, I do cycle. I cycle and I do art as well. And that kinda pull me out of the misery that I’m having sometimes.”

— Participant 4

Overall, these findings show that Filipino teachers used both interpersonal and personal coping strategies to manage immediate challenges while living and working in Taiwan. Seeking help provided practical and emotional support, while reflection and self-regulation helped teachers manage their emotions and respond more calmly to difficult situations. Self-care and recreational activities also provided opportunities to release stress and restore emotional well-being. These findings are consistent with Yi et al. (2020), who emphasized interpersonal support as an important coping resource for foreign teachers, and Fuentes-Vilugrón et al. (2024), who highlighted the role of emotional regulation in teachers' work experiences. The findings also support Nohilly (2023), who emphasized the importance of self-care practices in promoting teachers' well-being. Thus,

having access to supportive relationships and healthy personal coping strategies may help Filipino teachers manage stress and maintain emotional balance while adjusting to life and work in Taiwan.

Subtheme 2.2. Social Support Coping

Immediate family and partners were the primary sources of emotional support. Participants relied on their spouses, parents, siblings, and other close family members for comfort, encouragement, reassurance, and emotional strength during stressful situations.

“I always share my daily activities with my significant one. My partner helps me get through almost every mishap in every phase of my Taiwan journey. I also communicate with my closest cousin in the Philippines to share diverse experiences.”

— Participant 13

Friends and social circles also served as important sources of support. Participants sought advice, shared experiences, and emotional encouragement from friends, particularly fellow Filipino teachers in Taiwan who could relate to their experiences and help reduce feelings of loneliness.

“and sometimes I talk to my friends though finding schedule is hard because you know life happens and we all have work really hard to get in touch with each other but I see to it that I talk to people who are close to me because it’s different to have support system who can understand you. You know that will make you feel less lonely.”

— Participant 3

Work-related support from coordinators, directors, supervisors, and co-workers helped participants manage professional concerns. These individuals provided guidance, reassurance, and practical solutions to work-related challenges, enabling participants to adjust more effectively to their teaching environment.

“Maybe authority if it really needs intervention. For example, I am having a hard time collaborating with a co-teacher, I would bring it to my immediate superior so that they can help me and support me professionally because I don’t want to make things personal at work. So if we can talk about it in a professional manner, then that’s good.”

— Participant 7

Spiritual support also served as a source of strength for some participants. They relied on God and prayer during difficult situations, which provided them with comfort, guidance, hope, and emotional strength in coping with the challenges of living and working in Taiwan.

“I’m Christian, so I pray most of the time. So, that’s the strength. I get strength from praying.”

— Participant 4

Overall, these findings show that social support played an important role in helping Filipino teachers manage the emotional and professional challenges of living and working in Taiwan. Family members and partners provided emotional comfort and reassurance, while friends offered companionship and a sense of belonging. Coordinators, supervisors, and co-workers provided professional guidance and practical assistance, while spiritual support offered some participants comfort and strength during difficult situations. These findings are consistent with Yi et al. (2020), who emphasized interpersonal support as an important coping resource for foreign teachers. They also support Zhong et al. (2025), who highlighted the role of family support in promoting teachers’ well-being. Thus, having strong personal, professional, and spiritual support systems may help Filipino teachers cope with stress, reduce feelings of isolation, and adjust more effectively to living and teaching abroad.

Subtheme 2.3. Well-being Activities

Physical activities were the most common well-being practice. Participants engaged in walking, running, hiking, going to the gym, playing sports such as badminton and table tennis, dancing, and other outdoor activities to reduce stress, restore energy, and maintain their physical and emotional well-being.

"I commit to walking everyday aiming for 10 thousand steps. I take the bus going to my main school and do a 30 minute walk going home. Whenever I go to my co-school, I just walk. Same with going home. I think walking help me keeps my brain calm and relaxed especially at night."

— Participant 10

Leisure and recreational activities also helped participants relax and unwind. They maintained their emotional well-being through hobbies and enjoyable activities such as watching movies, reading, listening to music, creating art, playing video games, eating good food, drinking coffee, taking naps, browsing social media, and rewarding themselves after busy workdays.

"For habits, maybe hobbies I have. I draw, I write, maybe boring for some people. I read. I consume a lot of art. I watch a lot of shows and I have this thing that every month I would have to go outside and watch a movie in the theater just to consume some art and I think that's the best thing about creativity."

— Participant 7

Travel and exploration served as another important well-being activity. Participants spent quality time with family and friends by visiting parks, taking nature trips, exploring different places in Taiwan, going on picnics, and traveling, which helped them refresh their minds, reduce stress, and regain motivation.

"My family and I, we usually, I mean every weekend, we see to it that there will be a time that we go in the city downtown and sometime we have a picnic at the park and also we do, we play."

— Participant 2

Overall, these findings show that Filipino teachers engaged in different well-being activities to manage stress and maintain balance while living and working in Taiwan. Physical activities provided opportunities to stay active and relieve stress, while leisure and recreational activities allowed participants to relax and temporarily disengage from work-related demands. Travel and exploration also provided opportunities to spend time with family and friends, experience new environments, and regain motivation. These findings are consistent with Al-Johani et al. (2021), who associated physical activity with better mental well-being among teachers, and Pressman et al. (2009), who emphasized the positive relationship between enjoyable leisure activities and psychological well-being. Thus, engaging in physical, recreational, and leisure activities may serve as valuable self-care strategies that help Filipino teachers maintain their well-being while adjusting to the demands of living and teaching abroad.

From the perspective of the JD-R Model, these coping mechanisms can be understood as personal and social resources that help teachers respond to the demands of working and living abroad. Support from family, friends, co-teachers, coordinators, and colleagues provides emotional and practical resources, while self-regulation, self-care, spiritual practices, physical activities, and leisure help teachers manage stress and maintain emotional balance. These resources may reduce the strain associated with language, cultural, and workplace demands and support teachers' continued adjustment and well-being.

Theme 3: Resilience

The participants demonstrated resilience through various motivations that sustained their commitment to teaching despite challenges. Family motivation was the strongest source of resilience. Participants remained committed to their work because of their desire to provide a stable and comfortable life for their families, fulfill their responsibilities as providers, and secure a better future for their loved ones.

"First, my family. My kids. My home. My future. I don't want my children to be my retirement plan. I don't rely on them when I become old. When my husband and I become old, we want to be self-reliant. It's okay if they help us in their own little way, but we will never rely on them."

— Participant 14

Financial motivation also strengthened participants' resilience. Stable income, better salaries, and the ability to meet financial responsibilities, such as supporting their families, paying bills, and achieving financial security, encouraged them to persevere despite the challenges of living and working abroad.

“I work in life in Taiwan to honestly answer, or like politically correct, or I think money girl, money. Why money? This is gonna sound materialistic for some people. I would say that many Filipinos would agree that our situation in the Philippines is not in our best interests, especially for teachers. We’re professionals, but we don’t have a lot of benefits that would make us feel professional. And money is a matter of when I buy something because I have the money. I’m not buying the material thing. I’m buying myself time.”
— Participant 7

Opportunities gained through working in Taiwan also motivated participants to continue. Professional growth, travel opportunities, new experiences, and improved quality of life gave participants a sense of purpose and encouraged them to remain committed to their work.

“What motivates me is knowing that I was given the opportunity to teach here in Taiwan. I’m also able to travel to other countries and buy things that I couldn’t afford when I was in the Philippines.”
— Participant 8

Personal goals and future aspirations served as another important source of resilience. Participants remained focused on achieving their long-term goals, gaining international work experience, fulfilling their dreams, and building a better future, viewing their present challenges as temporary sacrifices toward those aspirations.

“My future plans and what I’ve been through. If I don’t remind myself that all of the hard work that I’ve been through, I feel like everything will be for nothing if I stop. So, yeah, future plans and hard work.”
— Participant 15

Overall, these findings show that the resilience of Filipino teachers in Taiwan was sustained by both personal and practical motivations. Family responsibilities gave participants a strong reason to persevere, while financial stability, opportunities abroad, and future aspirations encouraged them to continue despite the challenges they encountered. These findings are consistent with Fabella and Campos (2022), who found that financial benefits, professional growth, and supportive relationships influenced the motivation of Filipino teachers in Taiwan. They also align with Sheridan et al. (2022), who emphasized adaptation, self-reflection, and supportive relationships in strengthening teacher resilience, and Taşdemir (2022), who found that international teaching experiences contribute to personal and professional growth. Thus, resilience among Filipino teachers may be understood not only as the ability to endure difficulties but also as the capacity to remain committed because of meaningful relationships, opportunities, financial goals, and future aspirations.

Within the JD-R framework, these sources of resilience may function as personal and motivational resources that help teachers sustain their commitment despite demanding circumstances. Family responsibilities, financial goals, professional opportunities, and future aspirations provide meaningful reasons for persistence, while supportive relationships and adaptive coping strategies strengthen teachers’ capacity to manage challenges. This indicates that resilience is supported not only by individual perseverance but also by the personal and social resources available to teachers while working abroad.

Theme 4: Insights Gained

The participants shared insights that reflect both personal growth and professional development.

Subtheme 4.1. Lessons Learned from Working and Living in Taiwan.

Adaptability and flexibility emerged as the most important lesson learned. Participants recognized the importance of adjusting to different cultures, educational systems, teaching practices, and daily routines, which contributed to both their personal and professional growth.

“The most important lesson I’ve learned is the importance of adaptability. Most of the time, I need to adjust to systems and practices that are different from what I’m used to. Even when it feels challenging, learning to adapt and follow the system has helped me grow both professionally and personally.”
— Participant 1

Independence and personal growth were also significant insights gained by the participants. Living and working abroad encouraged them to become more self-reliant, responsible, resilient, and confident while helping them better understand their strengths, limitations, and personal values.

“It also strengthened my sense of resilience and self-awareness in handling the challenges of working abroad.”

— Participant 2

Cultural understanding was another important lesson learned. Participants developed greater respect for cultural differences, became more open-minded, and learned to appreciate diverse perspectives, enabling them to build better relationships and adapt more effectively to Taiwanese society.

“I also learned that Philippine culture is different from Taiwanese culture, so feeling left out does not mean people do not like me. Sometimes they just do not know how to start a conversation. What matters most is doing my job well.”

— Participant 5

Values and mindset for living abroad also emerged as an important insight. Participants developed qualities such as patience, gratitude, kindness, perseverance, firmness, and acceptance, which helped them manage the personal and professional challenges of living and working in another country.

“Not everyone is your friend, even if they are your co-teachers or the other Filipinos you meet. You have to make sure that your upbringing is solid or else, you will be easily persuaded by anything. Learn how to say no firmly. Even if you are friendly, you have to learn the art of saying no.”

— Participant 10

Overall, these findings show that living and working in Taiwan provided Filipino teachers with meaningful lessons that extended beyond their professional roles. Their experiences strengthened their adaptability, independence, cultural understanding, and personal values, which helped them respond more effectively to the demands of living and teaching in a different cultural environment. These findings are consistent with Sheridan et al. (2022), who emphasized adaptability, self-reflection, and supportive relationships as important in developing teacher resilience. They also align with Taşdemir (2022), who found that international teaching experiences can contribute to both personal and professional growth. Thus, the participants' experiences suggest that working abroad can promote not only professional development but also greater self-awareness, cultural sensitivity, and personal growth.

Subtheme 4.2. Professional Growth and Changes in Teaching Practice

An improved teaching approach was the most common change reported by the participants. They became more flexible, creative, and adaptable in their teaching by modifying instructional strategies, improving classroom management, adjusting lessons to students' needs, and responding effectively to cultural differences and diverse learning abilities.

“My experience in Taiwan has changed me significantly as a teacher, especially in terms of my teaching approaches. The methods and classroom dynamics here are very different from my previous teaching experience in the Philippines, which has pushed me to become more flexible.”

— Participant 1

Professional maturity also developed through their experiences in Taiwan. Participants became more self-aware, reflective, detail-oriented, and confident while learning to work effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, communicate better with colleagues and students, and adapt to various workplace situations.

“I have become more detail-oriented and learned how to work effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, countries, and languages.”

— Participant 6

Greater patience and understanding emerged as another important change in teaching practice. Participants became more patient, empathetic, open-minded, and understanding, particularly when teaching students with different learning abilities, language proficiencies, and cultural backgrounds.

“This is because the last 5 years of my career were focused in andragogy, so I had to change my environment to make sure that I master another skill. After four years, teaching young learners made me become more patient. I think that is two of the best things that changed in me are being able to control my emotions and becoming more patient.”

— Participant 10

Overall, these findings show that the participants' experiences in Taiwan contributed to meaningful changes in their professional practices and development as teachers. Exposure to a different educational and cultural environment encouraged them to become more flexible in their teaching approaches, more reflective and mature professionally, and more patient and understanding toward learners with diverse needs and abilities. These findings align with Taşdemir (2022), who found that international teaching experiences can contribute to teachers' personal and professional development. They are also consistent with Sheridan et al. (2022), who emphasized adaptability and self-reflection as important aspects of teachers' professional growth. Thus, teaching in Taiwan not only required participants to adjust to a new educational environment but also provided opportunities to strengthen their teaching practices, professional maturity, and ability to respond to diverse learners.

These findings may also be understood through the Job Demand-Control (JD-C) Model. As teachers encountered demanding situations in unfamiliar educational and cultural environments, they developed greater adaptability, independence, confidence, and flexibility in responding to these demands. Their experiences encouraged them to reflect on and adjust their teaching practices, classroom management, and communication strategies. This suggests that developing greater capacity to manage and respond to work demands may contribute to teachers' professional growth and adjustment in an international teaching environment.

Theme 5: Proposed Support Programs

The participants suggested several support programs that could help Filipino teachers adjust better while living and working in Taiwan. Community networks and social support were among the most frequently recommended interventions. Participants emphasized the importance of strengthening support groups, organizing regular gatherings, and creating opportunities for Filipino teachers to share experiences, exchange best practices, and build meaningful connections that reduce loneliness and promote a sense of belonging.

“Support groups would be very helpful, especially programs where Filipino teachers can share best practices, exchange experiences, and learn from one another.”

— Participant 5

Cultural orientation and development programs were also recommended to help Filipino teachers better understand Taiwanese culture, workplace expectations, and daily life. Participants suggested orientation sessions, professional development workshops, financial literacy programs, and welfare and rights discussions to improve their adjustment and professional growth.

“It would be nice when Filipino teachers come here to Taiwan, there is like a cultural debriefing program or orientation that maybe MECO or the embassy can coordinate with the local government so that they can teach Filipino teachers what they can expect inside a classroom, how a Taiwanese classroom works.”

— Participant 7

Language support programs, particularly free or school-based Mandarin classes, were identified as an essential intervention. Participants believed that improving basic Mandarin proficiency would strengthen communication with students, co-teachers, school staff, and local people, making both work and daily life in Taiwan easier.

"I think number one is free language classes for Filipino teachers in every school, tailored for teachers to improve communication in both professional and social settings. To me, that should be a part of our survival kit."

— Participant 14

Mental health support was another important recommendation. Participants suggested providing regular check-ins, counseling services, mental health workshops, and wellness programs to help teachers manage stress, reduce feelings of isolation, and maintain their emotional well-being while living and working abroad.

"Regular check-ins or mental health support programs would really help."

— Participant 11

Overall, these findings show that Filipino teachers need support that addresses both their professional and personal adjustment while living and working in Taiwan. Community networks may provide social connection and reduce feelings of isolation, while cultural orientation programs may help teachers better understand workplace expectations and Taiwanese culture. Language support directly responds to the communication difficulties identified as one of the major challenges in this study, while mental health services may help teachers manage stress and maintain their emotional well-being. These recommendations are consistent with Yi et al. (2020), who emphasized the importance of interpersonal support and cultural adaptation among foreign teachers, and Nwoko et al. (2024), who highlighted the value of social support and well-being resources for teachers. Thus, providing integrated support in language, cultural adjustment, social connection, and mental well-being may help Filipino teachers adjust more effectively and sustain their professional and personal well-being in Taiwan.

Specifically, the Ministry of Education and the Teach Taiwan Program may strengthen pre-deployment cultural and workplace orientation, while schools may provide Mandarin language support and clearer co-teaching guidelines. School administrators and coordinators may also conduct regular check-ins, while Filipino teacher networks and relevant agencies may provide peer support, counseling, and wellness services.

Viewed through the JD-R and JD-C models, these proposed support programs may strengthen the resources available to Filipino teachers in managing the demands of working and living abroad. Language assistance, cultural orientation, community networks, mental health services, and professional support may help reduce the strain associated with communication difficulties, cultural adjustment, and workplace demands while increasing teachers' capacity to respond effectively to challenging situations. Therefore, strengthening institutional and social resources may promote better adjustment, well-being, and teaching effectiveness among Filipino teachers in Taiwan.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, several conclusions were drawn. Filipino teachers in Taiwan experienced various work-related and daily-life challenges, particularly language barriers, cultural adjustment, communication difficulties, and workplace demands. These challenges affected both their teaching performance and personal well-being but also encouraged them to develop adaptability and resilience. Filipino teachers managed these challenges through different coping mechanisms, including seeking social support, practicing reflection and self-regulation, engaging in self-care activities, and participating in physical, recreational, and spiritual activities that promoted their emotional well-being. The resilience of Filipino teachers was sustained by their commitment to their families, financial responsibilities, professional opportunities, and future aspirations. These motivations enabled them to remain dedicated to their work despite the challenges of living and teaching abroad. The experiences of living and working in Taiwan contributed to the participants' personal and professional growth. They became more adaptable, independent, culturally aware, patient, and reflective, while also improving their teaching approaches, classroom management, communication skills, and ability to respond to diverse learners. The findings suggest that stronger support systems, including community networks, cultural orientation programs, language assistance, and mental health support, may help Filipino teachers adjust more effectively, enhance their well-being, and strengthen their teaching performance while working and living in Taiwan.

Future studies may employ methodological triangulation by incorporating classroom observations, document analysis, and follow-up interviews alongside participants' self-reported experiences. These additional sources of data may provide richer and more comprehensive perspectives, strengthen the interpretation of findings, and allow researchers to examine the lived experiences of Filipino teachers in Taiwan from multiple sources of evidence.

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