

Pleasure and Pressure in Teaching

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Teachers were the Most Valuable Players (MVPs) at all levels of education. As a profession marked by high demand and complex challenges, teaching required individuals to assume multifaceted roles. Within the classroom, teachers functioned as coaches, psychologists, referees, curriculum implementers, evaluators, and even caregivers. In essence, they were multitaskers dedicated to shaping productive members of society. They carried the weight of professional expectations, qualifications, and ethical responsibilities, serving, alongside parents, as primary providers of knowledge and values. However, such authority also brought heightened societal expectations, which at times pressured teachers to renegotiate their professional dignity and autonomy in order to sustain a supportive and engaging learning environment.

Despite these pressures, teaching also offered meaningful sources of pleasure and fulfillment. A supportive work environment played a vital role in enhancing teachers' well-being and professional satisfaction. When teachers experienced collegial relationships, shared goals, and mutual respect, they were more likely to feel motivated and committed to their work. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) emphasized that collaborative teamwork significantly

increased motivation and job satisfaction among educators, contributing to improved retention and reduced turnover. Likewise, Maas et al. (2021) highlighted the critical role of school leaders in providing social and emotional support, which helped alleviate occupational stress. These positive interpersonal dynamics fostered a sense of belonging and purpose, allowing teachers to derive intrinsic satisfaction from their profession.

At the same time, the profession was accompanied by considerable pressures that could affect teachers' well-being. Heavy workloads, administrative demands, large class sizes, and the expectation to address diverse learner needs often led to stress and burnout. Teachers were not only expected to deliver academic content but also to manage behavioral issues, provide emotional support, and meet institutional performance standards. This constant balancing of responsibilities could create tension between professional expectations and personal capacity. Furthermore, societal expectations for teachers to consistently demonstrate patience, empathy, and competence added another layer of emotional labor. When support systems were insufficient, these pressures could diminish job satisfaction and impact teacher retention.

Pleasures Gained from the Teaching Profession

Amid the multiple demands and pressures of the profession, teaching remains deeply rewarding, offering intrinsic pleasures that sustain educators' commitment and sense of purpose. Teaching is not solely defined by its challenges but also by meaningful experiences that provide emotional fulfillment, professional identity, and personal growth. Contentment and dedication are therefore essential elements of teachers' professional lives, as they shape both job satisfaction and resilience in the face of ongoing pressures.



According to Santos (2022), teachers in the Philippines derive a profound sense of fulfillment from guiding students to become responsible and capable individuals. This sense of purpose strengthens their dedication to the profession, particularly when students achieve learning outcomes that reflect instructional goals. Such moments of success represent more than academic accomplishment; they affirm teachers' roles as agents of transformation. In this way, the pleasure of teaching is closely tied to witnessing student growth, which reinforces teachers' intrinsic motivation and provides a counterbalance to occupational stress.

Equally important are the positive interpersonal relationships that teachers build within the school community. Garcia (2021) identified supportive workplace relationships as a significant source of professional enjoyment, including collaboration with colleagues, engaging classroom interactions, and expressions of appreciation from students. These interactions foster a sense of belonging and collegiality, contributing to a positive school climate. Strong teacher–student relationships, in particular, enhance the learning process while simultaneously providing emotional rewards for teachers, reinforcing their commitment despite the demands of the profession.

Positive classroom experiences also play a crucial role in shaping teachers' well-being. Reyes (2020) emphasized that successful lessons, active student participation, and observable academic progress contribute to teachers' sense of accomplishment and professional satisfaction. A supportive classroom environment not only empowers students but also encourages teachers, creating a reciprocal dynamic of motivation and engagement. These positive experiences help mitigate the negative effects of stress, demonstrating how pleasure and pressure coexist within the teaching profession.

Moreover, the emotional rewards associated with teaching often sustain educators through challenging circumstances. Villanueva (2019) noted



that although teaching is inherently stressful, characterized by extended working hours and administrative demands, it is sustained by rewarding experiences such as student recognition, gratitude, and parental appreciation. These affirmations validate teachers' efforts and reinforce their sense of purpose, enabling them to remain engaged and committed.

Lopez (2018) further highlighted that meaningful teacher–student relationships are central to the emotional and psychological benefits of teaching. These connections foster a sense of fulfillment that extends beyond instructional duties, contributing to teachers' overall well-being. In addition, peer support and mentorship within schools strengthen professional collaboration and create an environment where teachers feel valued and supported.

The Challenges and Pressures of the Teaching Profession

Challenges in the education sector have persisted over time, arising from both internal limitations and external societal demands that continuously shape, and often strain, the teaching profession. Teachers operate within environments characterized by competing expectations, limited resources, and increasing accountability (Li et al., 2025). Teachers commonly face stressors such as excessive workloads, large class sizes, extended working hours, and insufficient time for assessment and feedback (Agyapong et al., 2022). These conditions not only hinder instructional effectiveness but also diminish motivation and professional satisfaction. In the study of Amata (2023), involving 339 teachers, multiple pressure points were identified, including target-driven performance systems, heightened parental expectations, inadequate classroom resources, and unsupportive collegial environments. Such findings reinforce that teaching is not merely instructional work but a



high-pressure profession requiring emotional resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms.

The pressures intensified significantly during periods of crisis, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed systemic vulnerabilities in education. At the height of the pandemic in 2020, around 75% of public school teachers reported experiencing fear and anxiety due to the abrupt transition to online teaching (Yi et al., 2021). Stress emerged as the primary factor affecting teaching effectiveness, compounded by limited administrative and technical support (Robinson et al., 2023). This period underscored how external disruptions magnify existing pressures, forcing teachers to rapidly adjust pedagogical approaches while managing personal uncertainties. The sudden shift also expanded teachers' roles, requiring them to become technologically competent while still maintaining instructional quality, thereby intensifying cognitive and emotional demands.

Persistent structural challenges further contribute to professional pressure. Ineffective resource allocation, heavy workloads, and limited research capability among teachers restrict opportunities for professional growth and innovation. Ulla et al. (2017) emphasized the need for targeted interventions such as research training, institutional incentives, and the development of a strong research culture to empower teachers and reduce professional stagnation. Without such support, teachers may experience a sense of inefficacy, which can negatively affect both performance and long-term career commitment. In the Philippine context, David et al. (2019) highlighted how stress, compounded by politicization within public school systems, undermines teaching quality and contributes to attrition, further illustrating how systemic pressures extend beyond the classroom into organizational and sociopolitical domains.



Technological and pedagogical transitions have also introduced new layers of pressure in teaching. Gallespen (2021) identified key challenges during the shift from face-to-face to online learning, including unstable internet connectivity, limited digital competence, and insufficient social and institutional support. These barriers not only disrupted instructional delivery but also increased teachers' workload and stress levels. Similarly, Calyawa and Tampus (2023) found that in blended learning environments, teachers faced compounded pressures from leadership expectations, resource limitations, classroom management complexities, and student disengagement. Evolving teaching modalities, while offering opportunities for innovation, simultaneously demand continuous adaptation, often without adequate preparation or support.

From a broader international perspective, the pressure to integrate technology effectively into teaching has become increasingly pronounced. Kaminskienė et al. (2022) emphasized the growing importance of digital literacy as a core teaching competency, while Bećirović (2023) identified barriers such as limited access to technological resources, insufficient institutional support, and low teacher self-efficacy. These challenges illustrate that modern teaching extends beyond content delivery to include technological proficiency and instructional design, further expanding the scope of teachers' responsibilities.

The Influence of Purpose on Job Performance and Commitment

A strong sense of purpose serves as a critical driver of teachers' job performance and professional commitment (Hong et al., 2025), linking both the pleasures and pressures inherent in the teaching profession. Purpose enables teachers to navigate demanding work conditions by anchoring their efforts in meaningful goals (Gu, 2023), thereby enhancing both motivation and



resilience. Teachers who perceive their work as significant and impactful are more likely to engage deeply in their roles, resulting in improved instructional quality and sustained commitment.

Teachers' participation in professional development activities reflects this sense of purpose, as it demonstrates their willingness to grow and improve in their profession. Decano and Vallejo (2019) examined the relationship between job commitment, job satisfaction, and teaching performance in public and private secondary schools in Northern Aurora, Philippines. Their findings revealed that teachers who were both competent and committed exhibited higher levels of job satisfaction and performance. Administrative support and opportunities for professional growth were identified as essential factors in strengthening teachers' commitment, suggesting that institutional structures play a key role in nurturing purpose-driven educators.

Similarly, Cloma and Dioso (2023) explored teachers' engagement in relation to job satisfaction and performance in Nabunturan, Davao de Oro. The study found that self-motivated teachers with strong professional ethics demonstrated higher levels of commitment and effectiveness. In this context, purpose was reflected in teachers' dedication not only to their students but also to their profession, teaching practices, and the broader educational community. From a broader perspective, Bashir and Gani (2020) emphasized the positive relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction among university teachers in India. When teachers experience satisfaction in their work, their commitment to the organization strengthens, ultimately enhancing performance. This underscores the role of a supportive and conducive work environment in fostering both purpose and productivity, particularly in a profession that demands sustained emotional and cognitive investment.



Further reinforcing this connection, Wartenberg et al. (2023), through a systematic review and meta-analysis, found that teacher job satisfaction is strongly associated with positive teacher–student relationships, which in turn inspire student learning. The study also revealed that higher levels of satisfaction are linked to lower absenteeism and reduced turnover intentions. In addition, Hoque et al. (2023) reported that teachers’ participation in self-managed work teams significantly increased job satisfaction. Lopes and Oliveira (2020) further argued that teacher satisfaction is a functional requirement of effective teaching, asserting that satisfied teachers are more focused, engaged, and productive. Therefore, continuous professional development and a supportive work environment are essential in cultivating organizational commitment.

Understanding The Teaching Profession Through Self-Determination Theory

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) developed by Ryan and Deci (1985) provides a comprehensive lens for understanding teachers’ motivation, performance, and commitment within the dual context of pleasure and pressure in the profession. SDT posits that human motivation is shaped by the fulfillment of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In teaching, these needs are not only central to professional functioning but also determine how educators experience both the rewarding and demanding aspects of their work. When these needs are fulfilled, teachers are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation, which sustains engagement even in challenging conditions.

Within the teaching profession, autonomy is reflected in teachers’ ability to exercise professional judgment, such as designing instructional strategies and adapting lessons to meet diverse learner needs. Autonomy-



supportive environments, where teachers are trusted and empowered, enhance intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction (Reyes, 2020). However, when autonomy is restricted by rigid curricula, excessive administrative control, or performance pressures, teaching becomes more burdensome, contributing to stress and reduced motivation. Thus, autonomy represents both a source of professional pleasure when supported and a point of pressure when constrained.

Competence, another core component of SDT, refers to teachers' sense of effectiveness in facilitating learning. This is reinforced when teachers observe positive student outcomes, successfully implement instructional strategies, and engage in continuous professional development (Santos, 2022; Calyawa & Tampus, 2023). Feelings of competence contribute significantly to teachers' confidence, satisfaction, and sense of accomplishment, key sources of pleasure in teaching. Conversely, limited resources, inadequate training, or rapidly changing educational demands (such as technological integration) can undermine this sense of competence, transforming teaching into a source of anxiety and professional pressure (Amata, 2023; David et al., 2019).

The third component, relatedness, emphasizes the importance of meaningful interpersonal relationships. In educational settings, this is evident in positive teacher–student interactions and supportive collegial relationships (Garcia, 2021; Lopez, 2018). These connections foster a sense of belonging and emotional fulfillment, which are essential for sustaining motivation and well-being. Relatedness represents one of the most profound sources of pleasure in teaching, as educators derive meaning from influencing students' lives and collaborating with peers. However, when social support is lacking, such as in unsupportive work environments or strained relationships, teachers may experience isolation, thereby intensifying professional pressures.



SDT also distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, offering further insight into how teachers navigate the demands of their profession. Teachers driven by intrinsic motivation, such as passion for teaching, commitment to student growth, and a sense of purpose, are more resilient in the face of challenges, including heavy workloads, time constraints, and resource limitations (Amata, 2023; David et al., 2019). In contrast, reliance on extrinsic motivators alone, such as salary or external recognition, may not sustain long-term commitment, particularly in high-pressure environments.

Empirical evidence supports this SDT-informed perspective. Decano and Vallejo (2019) demonstrated that teachers' competence and commitment are positively associated with performance, while Cloma and Dioso (2023) linked intrinsic motivation to higher job satisfaction. Similarly, Bashir and Gani (2020) and Wartenberg et al. (2023) found that supportive environments that fulfill teachers' psychological needs enhance organizational commitment, reduce turnover intentions, and improve teacher–student relationships. These findings affirm that when teachers' basic psychological needs are met, they are better equipped to transform pressures into manageable challenges and to sustain the pleasures inherent in teaching.

RESEARCH FOCUS: Life Stories of Teachers and Their Sense of Experience

This narrative inquiry explored the range of challenges teachers face in order to understand what motivates them and the obstacles they encounter in their profession. While several studies have examined teacher job satisfaction (i.e., Amata, 2023; Cloma & Dioso, 2023), the lived experiences of public school teachers in the District of Malinao have not been adequately documented. Most existing studies are quantitative, with limited qualitative



research focusing on teachers' lived and felt experiences in finding meaning in their work.

This study generated empirical narratives from public school teachers in the Malinao District, capturing how they interpret and make sense of their professional experiences. By examining themes such as pleasure, pressure, and purpose, the study provides evidence of how teachers' lived realities influence their performance and commitment. It contributes to the literature by offering context-specific insights grounded in actual teacher experiences.

The study employed a qualitative narrative inquiry design (Creswell, 2013) to explore teachers' lived experiences and how they construct meaning around their professional roles. It was conducted in the rural District of Malinao, Aklan, Philippines, focusing on public elementary and secondary school teachers to capture context-specific challenges and motivations within a resource-constrained setting.

Eight teachers were selected through purposive sampling based on criteria such as having at least five years of teaching experience, representing both elementary and secondary levels, belonging to varied age groups, and residing in Malinao. This ensured the inclusion of diverse yet relevant perspectives while maintaining the depth required in narrative inquiry. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews guided by a validated interview protocol. These interviews allowed participants to share detailed accounts of their motivations, challenges, and sense of purpose. All interviews were conducted in comfortable settings, audio-recorded with participants' consent, and subjected to participant validation to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data.

The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. This involved familiarization with the data, coding, theme development, refinement, definition, and reporting. This systematic process

ensured that the themes identified were grounded in the participants' actual narratives. Ethical standards were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality through pseudonyms, secure data storage, and adherence to the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Participants were treated with respect, were allowed to withdraw at any time, and were provided with a safe and supportive research environment.

The themes identified through thematic analysis reflect the actual lived experiences of teachers, highlighting how they perceive the pleasures, pressures, and sense of purpose in their profession. These findings are grounded in participants' firsthand accounts and provide insight into how their experiences influence their motivation, performance, and commitment.

Pleasures in Teaching

Empirical evidence from the participants' narratives indicates that teachers experience deep fulfillment in their profession. Several participants explicitly described moments of student improvement, such as enhanced reading skills and increased confidence in mathematics, which reinforced their sense of purpose. These accounts demonstrate that observable student progress serves as a primary source of motivation.

The findings further show that positive relationships with students and colleagues significantly contribute to teachers' well-being. Participants reported that students' expressions of appreciation and collaborative teamwork among colleagues fostered a sense of belonging and emotional support. These relational experiences emerged consistently across narratives, indicating their central role in sustaining motivation.

In addition, the data reveal that teachers' personal values and passion for teaching shape their professional commitment. Participants described teaching as aligned with their personal goals, such as inspiring curiosity and

facilitating learning, suggesting that intrinsic motivation is a key driver of satisfaction.

Pressures in Teaching

The study also generated strong empirical evidence of the pressures teachers face. Participants consistently reported time constraints and heavy workloads, particularly the challenge of balancing instructional responsibilities with administrative tasks. These accounts highlight structural demands that limit teachers' efficiency and sense of control.

Managing diverse student needs emerged as another significant challenge. Participants described difficulties in addressing varying learning levels and maintaining classroom discipline, indicating that differentiated instruction requires substantial effort and adaptability.

Emotional and psychological strain was also evident. Participants shared experiences of exhaustion, stress, and self-doubt, demonstrating that teaching involves considerable emotional labor. These findings suggest that such pressures directly affect teachers' well-being and professional performance.

Impact of Sense of Purpose on Job Performance and Commitment

The findings provide clear empirical evidence that a strong sense of purpose enhances teachers' performance and commitment. Participants reported engaging in innovative teaching practices, improving student engagement, and implementing targeted interventions for struggling learners. These actions reflect a proactive and committed approach to teaching driven by purpose.

Purpose also emerged as a critical factor in sustaining resilience. Despite the challenges they encountered, participants continued to

demonstrate dedication to their roles, including pursuing professional development and maintaining efforts to support student learning. This indicates that purpose functions as a protective factor against burnout.

Furthermore, the data show that purpose influences long-term career aspirations. Participants expressed intentions to pursue advanced roles in education and advocate for systemic improvements, suggesting that purpose extends beyond immediate job performance to shape long-term professional commitment.

Inspirational Narratives and Self-Exploration

Participants' narratives provide evidence that mentorship and role models significantly influence professional growth. Teachers identified individuals who shaped their teaching philosophies and practices, indicating the importance of social learning in professional development.

Reflective practices also emerged as a key theme. Participants described engaging in reflection to better understand their teaching roles and improve their practices, suggesting that reflection supports continuous learning and self-awareness.

Support systems, including peer collaboration and administrative assistance, were likewise identified as essential. Participants emphasized that these systems enhanced their motivation and resilience, demonstrating the importance of a supportive work environment.

Proposed Wellness Program: FIND

Based on the empirical findings, the FIND (Fostering Inspiration, Nurturing Development) Wellness Program was developed to address the challenges identified in the study. The program integrates mentorship, professional development, mental health support, and collaborative practices,

all of which are directly grounded in participants' reported experiences and needs.

Participants indicated that such a program could enhance their well-being, strengthen teamwork, and align professional growth with personal purpose. These responses suggest that structured interventions informed by empirical evidence have the potential to reduce workplace stress and sustain teacher commitment.

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