

Teachers' Family–Work Balance

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The increasing deployment of educators to remote areas, such as islands, mountainous regions, and distant provinces, raises important concerns about their well-being, job satisfaction, and long-term commitment to the teaching profession. Given that the quality of education is closely linked to teacher motivation and stability (Luu, 2020; Kontar et al., 2025), understanding these realities is essential. While the importance of work–life balance in education is well established (Bisht et al., 2026; Wei & Ye, 2022; Tran et al., 2025), limited attention has been given to teachers assigned away from their families. Such assignments often involve long-distance travel, higher living costs, and the psychological strain of prolonged separation from loved ones. Çobanoğlu et al. (2023) noted that job stress and work–life imbalance are significant predictors of career dissatisfaction and burnout in the education sector. These challenges are further intensified when teachers must perform their duties under difficult living and working conditions.

For teachers assigned in distant locations, family–work balance becomes particularly complex as professional responsibilities often compete directly with familial roles and obligations (Wu & Wu, 2026; Jia & Boo, 2026; Eden, 2025; Sarwar et al., 2025). The physical distance from spouses, children, and extended family members can lead to feelings of isolation, emotional

fatigue, and reduced social support. In many cases, teachers are unable to participate in important family events or provide immediate care and guidance to their children. This imbalance not only affects their personal lives but may also influence their classroom performance and overall teaching effectiveness (Galut, 2025; Kingsford-Smith et al., 2023).

Maintaining communication and connection with family members across distances requires additional time, effort, and financial resources. Frequent travel to visit family may not always be feasible due to demanding schedules and limited transportation options, further deepening the sense of disconnection. As a result, teachers may adopt coping strategies such as relying on digital communication, forming support networks with colleagues, or establishing structured routines to manage their dual roles. However, while these strategies may provide temporary relief, they do not fully address the underlying challenge of prolonged separation.

Work–Family Balance and Resilience Among Teachers in Remote Assignments

Teaching far from home presents a complex set of challenges that affect both teachers' professional effectiveness and personal well-being. Empirical evidence reveals interconnected themes related to work–life balance, systemic barriers, coping strategies, and career aspirations. For instance, a consistent theme across studies is the critical role of work–life balance in influencing teacher satisfaction and productivity (Bisht et al., 2026; Safina et al., 2025; Li & Albattat, 2025). Disruptions caused by work–family conflict negatively affect teachers' attitudes and behaviors, which may lead to reduced job satisfaction and increased absenteeism. However, Caraan et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of social support mechanisms, such as collaboration and effective communication, as essential coping resources that

help mitigate the isolation associated with remote teaching assignments. This psychosocial perspective, according to Bonifacio (2016), is normally reflected in inflexible salary policies and inadequate living conditions, which contribute to dissatisfaction and turnover.

In terms of coping mechanisms, the literature highlights a dynamic interaction between individual resilience and institutional support. Studies conducted in the Philippine context (Robosa et al., 2021; Talidong & Toquero, 2020) document teachers' innovative adaptations to changing educational demands. In contrast, Tria (2020) identified gaps in teachers' psychological preparedness for sudden instructional changes. These circumstances underscore the need for comprehensive professional development programs that address both skill enhancement and emotional resilience.

Career aspirations also emerge as a strong motivating factor that encourages teachers to persevere despite challenges. Lopez-Bonilla et al. (2012) and Schoon (2007) found that high career aspirations are positively associated with improved academic and professional outcomes. However, these aspirations are influenced by both individual self-efficacy and broader socio-institutional contexts. Pham et al. (2024) describe career aspiration as a lifelong process shaped by perceived abilities and achievements. Similarly, Bhat and Khandai (2016) emphasized that alignment between educational experiences and career goals strengthens motivation and performance.

Teachers assigned far from home are affected by a combination of personal, social, and institutional factors. Addressing their needs requires integrated policies that reduce systemic barriers, promote social and emotional well-being, and support career development. Such a holistic approach is essential to sustaining teachers' resilience and commitment, ultimately improving educational outcomes in geographically isolated areas.

A Coping Theory Perspective on Teachers' Work–Family Balance

Lazarus and Folkman's Coping Theory (1984) conceptualizes coping as a dynamic process in which individuals use cognitive and behavioral strategies to manage stressors perceived as overwhelming or beyond their control. Central to this framework are two stages of cognitive appraisal: primary appraisal, which involves evaluating whether a situation poses a threat, and secondary appraisal, which assesses the resources available to address the stressor. When individuals perceive their resources as insufficient, they tend to use emotion-focused coping strategies to regulate their emotional responses. Conversely, when they believe they have sufficient resources, they adopt problem-focused coping strategies aimed at addressing the source of stress. Coping, therefore, includes both actions and emotional responses, which may be adaptive or maladaptive depending on how well they match the demands of the situation.

This framework provides a lens for understanding how teachers assigned far from home assess and respond to the various stressors associated with geographic separation from their families and communities. It enables an exploration of how teachers evaluate their internal and external resources and select appropriate coping strategies to manage professional and personal challenges.

Additionally, Bandura's concept of self-efficacy complements this framework by emphasizing the role of personal beliefs in shaping behavior and resilience. Teachers' confidence in their abilities influences how they cope with stress and adapt to challenging environments. These theories provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding the coping mechanisms of teachers working far from home and how self-efficacy contributes to their well-being and career satisfaction.

RESEARCH FOCUS: Narratives of Teachers Assigned to Distant Areas

By providing qualitative insights into the lived experiences of teachers assigned to remote areas, this study aims to inform educational stakeholders, school administrators, and policymakers about the unique needs of this group. This study aims to navigate the challenges of balancing professional responsibilities with family life.

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore and elucidate the lived experiences of teachers assigned far from their homes. The phenomenological approach was selected to capture the depth, complexity, and meaning of these educators' experiences to provide a comprehensive understanding of how they interpret and navigate their professional roles, challenges, and coping strategies in geographically remote settings. This approach is particularly appropriate for examining significant personal and occupational phenomena from the perspectives of those directly involved.

The research was conducted in Balabag, Malay, Aklan, with a prominent educational institution on Boracay Island that serves a diverse student population as the research setting. The participants consisted of eight teachers selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: residency outside Boracay Island, at least one year of teaching experience, and willingness to participate in the study. The research was carried out during the 2024–2025 academic year. To ensure ethical integrity and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in all documentation and reporting.

Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews guided by a carefully developed and expert-validated interview protocol. The interview guide consisted of two main parts: demographic and background information, and open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed narratives

about participants' lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and professional aspirations. Interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and conducted in the participants' preferred language to ensure clarity, comfort, and richness of data.

For data analysis, Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step descriptive phenomenological method was rigorously applied. This process included repeated reading of transcripts, extraction of significant statements, formulation of meanings, and clustering of these meanings into emergent themes. An exhaustive description of the phenomenon was then developed, followed by the identification of its fundamental structure. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, findings were returned to participants for validation. In addition, an inductive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to organize data into coherent patterns and higher-order themes, thereby enhancing analytical depth.

Participation was voluntary, and ethical standards were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participant autonomy. Necessary approvals were obtained from relevant educational authorities prior to data collection.

The Story of Living Away from Home

After analyzing the data gathered from teachers assigned far from home, it was found that their lived experiences are deeply shaped by prolonged separation from their families, difficulties in accessing necessary supplies, and the ongoing struggle to balance professional responsibilities with family obligations. Participants shared that this separation leads to emotional distress and homesickness, which negatively affect their motivation, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Many teachers reported relying on digital communication to maintain family connections, emphasizing its importance

in sustaining their emotional health. This finding aligns with Çobanoğlu et al. (2023), who highlighted that emotional well-being is closely linked to teachers' ability to maintain work–life balance despite geographic challenges. Similarly, Hershfield et al. (2013) noted that emotional strain resulting from separation can affect teacher performance and satisfaction.

Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers assigned far from home face significant logistical challenges, including limited access to essential teaching and personal supplies, high living expenses, and unreliable transportation. These difficulties hinder effective instruction and contribute to financial stress. Participants emphasized that the lack of resources requires them to be creative and resourceful in fulfilling their teaching responsibilities. These findings are consistent with Ferrer (2018), who identified resource scarcity and financial constraints as major barriers to teacher productivity in remote areas. Additionally, adverse weather conditions and long travel times further intensify these challenges, increasing anxiety and work–family conflict, as supported by Kämpfer and Mutz (2013).

Surviving The Work Away from Home

Despite the challenges, teachers demonstrated resilience by adopting various coping mechanisms to balance work and family life. Time management strategies, such as prioritizing tasks and setting boundaries, were commonly used to maximize limited personal time. Participants also emphasized the importance of maintaining regular communication with family members through digital platforms to reduce feelings of isolation. Social support from colleagues was another key factor in managing stress and fostering a sense of community within remote schools. These coping strategies align with the findings of Alwadai (2014), who emphasized that social support

and adaptive behaviors are essential for teacher retention in challenging environments.

The study also found that teachers assigned far from home remain motivated by their commitment to student success, career advancement, and the hope of eventual reassignment closer to their hometowns. Many expressed a strong desire to positively influence their students' academic and personal development despite personal hardships. This finding supports Sali and Marasigan (2020), who reported that teachers' dedication to student growth often drives perseverance in difficult conditions. Career progression and transfer opportunities were also identified as important factors in sustaining morale and long-term commitment, consistent with Marasigan (2019), who emphasized the role of professional growth in teacher retention.

Recommendations

It is essential to implement targeted interventions that address both the material and emotional needs of teachers assigned far from home. Recommended measures include improving access to teaching materials and financial support, enhancing transportation infrastructure, and developing institutional policies that promote work–life balance and career mobility. Strengthening technological infrastructure to support communication with families, as well as providing mental health services, is also critical. According to Galut (2025), resource limitations and isolation negatively affect teachers' well-being and effectiveness, necessitating comprehensive reforms. Hence, Walker (2023) suggests the need for institutional support to address transportation challenges, inadequate facilities, and resource scarcity, and recommended improved school program planning to enhance teacher performance and coping capacity in remote areas.

Conclusion

Although teachers assigned far from home play a vital role in educational delivery, their well-being and job satisfaction are at risk without adequate institutional support. Their strong desire for reassignment and professional growth suggests that many view their current placements as temporary. Therefore, sustained support for these teachers not only improves their well-being but also enhances their teaching performance and the overall quality of education. In this case, educational authorities must develop comprehensive support systems, including emotional counseling, financial assistance, healthcare services, and structured career advancement programs tailored for teachers working far from home.

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