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Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers, Vol. 13 (5)

<https://jett.labosfor.com/>

Date of reception: 15 Aug 2022

Date of revision: 11 oct 2022

Date of acceptance: 12 oct 2022

Gilda E. Deguma (2022). The Struggles Of Filipino Teachers In Thailand During The Pandemic: A Phenomenological Study *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, Vol. 13(5). 259-271.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the struggles and lived experiences of Filipino teachers in the Kingdom of Thailand who were purposely-selected for being graduates of the Teacher Education Program of Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College and employed as either private or public school teachers in Thailand. An online medium such as Messenger was used to gather data in which participants were interviewed as to their experiences and challenges encountered at workplace. Results show that their experiences are considered as full of opportunities through landing a job in a foreign country and proving their worth as good professional teachers; challenging because they were able to use their knowledge and skills to compete with other teachers in a foreign country and overcome the difficulties in the workplace so to enjoy their teaching career. The participants also performed well in the workplace and gained praises for work well done as they grow personally and professionally by gaining more selfconfidence, trust in their potentials, and desire for improvement. Despite the pandemic, Filipino teachers remained steadfast, prayerful, and with good values intact worthy of emulation. They are resilient and strive to excel in a global arena by maintaining their identities, providing evidence that they have embraced their roles as positive contributors to their learners and school communities, have overcome challenges in the workplace, and have served as inspiration to their fellow educators. The findings of this study could serve as an inspiring note for everyone seeking greener pasture, either in their own country or abroad, who are working truly towards success.

Keywords: Filipino teachers, COVID 19 pandemic, Struggles, Opportunities, Challenges, Growth, Thailand

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is considered as the noblest mission, vocation, and profession which contributed mainly to the non-material satisfaction of individuals who are engaged in it; in reality though, this is not a profitable profession (Rogayan, 2018). For Filipino teachers seeking for greener pasture, going abroad is considered a great opportunity to work, to earn a living, to provide for the needs of the family, and to see other places. This is also considered as a challenge especially for fresh graduates to prove their worth in the global arena and share their knowledge and skills to students and the educational community they are in. It is evident that culture in other countries are different from their own, it is considered as a challenge for the Filipino teachers to blend with their students, fellow teachers, and the community and strive to excel professionally in a foreign land. Their struggle is to improve their lives and be at pace with the challenges of the times. The researcher considered this suited to the way how the Filipino teachers in Thailand survive amidst difficult situations in life.

When Thailand was opened for teaching employment, it paved the way for the migration of Filipino professionals who are seeking jobs. Filipino workers continue to seek personal development to remain competitive in their chosen fields to improve quality of life through income, livelihood, and job security. Achieving higher education, accreditations, and recognition from the sending and receiving countries are considered capital investments thus Filipino teachers strive to work harder in schools where professional development is highly esteemed in the academic community though they are pressured to improve their teaching methods. They also seek avenues to improve their work performance to ensure that their employers will renew their contracts for another term. Thai culture has been recognized as hierarchical and authoritative and that culture and language are interrelated and influence the way students relate to their teachers in classroom settings. Teachers are perceived as knowledgeable coupled with good of moral values and students need to believe in what they say. This teacher authority is much likely to promote teacher-centered classrooms which resulted in difficulty to get the ideas and for the students to be expressive (Novio, 2015). To emphasize, education is always considering the foundation of every nations' economic development therefore the

government must invest knowledge for the entire citizens. It is a reality that education helps provide essential understanding and expertise to make people in the community functional individuals. It is also true that education is an investment for every person (Abulencia, 2015) and is considered as a tool to reduce poverty in order to improve people's lives. Many people have overcome living in poverty by finishing their studies, landing a job, and earning their salary to provide for their needs, and even put up their own investments.

A phenomenon could be identified as with the increase in the number of Filipino teachers who work for Thailand's education system. While economic purpose is their main intention, Filipino teachers have developed their niche in Thailand not only as expatriates but more importantly as core members of the local community: sharing vision, creating impact (Ancho, 2022). A narrative inquiry exploring the perspectives of young teachers in the Philippines on their reasons why they are teaching was conducted by Rogayan in 2018. Thirty-one (31) young Filipino teachers, aged 21-30, who were purposively selected as participants of the study cited that they teach to bring positive change, prepare students for life, serve as an inspiration, promote values, transform lives, teach for passion, set a higher bar of excellence in education, cure social problems, share knowledge and skills, and enable others' dreams. Frederiksen (2014), in his study, explored strengths and weaknesses of four (4) Filipino teachers working overseas as EFL educators through qualitative interviews which showed that the Filipino teachers' primary role is to teach communication and literacy skills. It was found out that the reasons why these four teachers have chosen to work abroad are higher salary rates and better working conditions, though their lack of knowledge of the local language and culture are considered their weaknesses. The respondents' positive attitude towards teaching English abroad proves that English language is important in the global arena.

Employment requirements have resulted in uncertainty for foreigners seeking work as teachers in Thailand. However, this same uncertainty enables non-Western teachers to utilize Thailand as a site for migration and employment in ways not possible in other parts of the region (Hickey, 2018). It was however observed that bolder and more adventurous educators venture in teaching abroad to explore education in other cultures as millennial generation flourishes in their workplace. Uytico and Abadiano (2020) conducted an in-depth exploration on the experiences of ten (10) millennial Filipino teachers who teach outside the Philippines. Four emergent themes and a central category on the experiences of millennial Filipino educators were identified in which "Survival abroad" is the dominant category with four essential themes: goals, immersion, culture shock, and attitude. These themes which were extracted from the stories of the participants could serve as a grounded construct to provide a better understanding of what it is like to survive while working in a foreign country. The grounded theory of goal-attitude-adaptation which may be considered as a key to survival of Filipino teachers abroad shows a way of life in teaching as it supports the principle that "adaptation and survival entails goals and a set of positive attitude." The findings of the study emphasized the story of millennial educators as they undertake the challenge of working abroad in order to accomplish personal growth and professional development. It might be true that change is inevitable but the importance of change should be realized, thus various concepts of teaching and learning are imperative today. In the study of de Mesa and de Guzman (2006), they suggested that teachers must be re-socialized on their respective new roles to provide students more active roles in the teaching-learning activities.

To add, English language teaching and learning are considered vital for the development of the country and its people, therefore English language teaching in Thailand has become one of the most popular jobs both for native and non-native English speaker-teachers. In another study by Ulla (2018) experiences of nine (9) Filipino university and college English teachers and their perceptions on the teaching of English as a foreign language in Thailand were presented. The findings revealed that although Filipino teachers were positive about teaching English to Thai students, they perceived that English language teaching in the country is a challenging task because of students' lack of interest in the English language, lack of exposure to and support for an English speaking environment, unclear and unsuitable English language curriculum, and lack of teacher professional development.

Some deficiencies in life arise due to deprivation and are said to motivate people when they are unmet. People, in reality, have the drive to achieve full potential in any situations and motivation to fulfill such needs will become stronger if the duration of denial gets long, such as, the longer a person goes without food, the more hungry he will become. According to Maslow (1943 in McLeod, 2018), individuals must satisfy lower level deficit needs before progressing on to meet higher level growth needs, though he later clarified that satisfaction of man's needs is not an "all-or-none" phenomenon. His earlier statements may have given "the false impression that a need must be satisfied 100 percent before man's next and other need emerges". Growth needs do not stem from a lack of something, but from a desire to grow as a person. If these growth needs are reasonably satisfied, a person may be able to reach the highest level of self-actualization (McLeod, 2018).

COVID 19 pandemic has created a world problem that affected the lives of everyone and school closures as part of measures to control the spread of the virus posed challenges that transformed the face of education around the World (Korkmaz & Mirici, 2021). The closing of some schools has significant ramifications on the learning process because it means the educational trajectory of students is halted and their learning and development is

impeded or even stopped (Nadiahan& Cabauatan, 2021). Furthermore, students became more isolated despite the new social setting as they are prone to suffer from mental and emotional traumas caused by isolation and solitude which are affecting almost everyone. As a response to the crisis in Thailand, the Education Minister has convinced educators to shift their education services to virtual and online classes, same as with other countries in the world. This crisis has affected Thai education system and has created a lot of unfavourable situations, like in any countries in the world. This new normal scenario caused teachers to make urgent interventions and gather resources to help their fellow teachers, students, and parents connect with learning materials that are already available, or improvise and innovate ideas and/or activities for a dynamic and successful teaching and learning experiences (Mala, 2020).

In this light, Filipino teachers in Thailand have been struggling with their personal and professional lives after schools closed to help control the spread of the coronavirus. Although they are still employed in some schools, many are hired under a "no work, no pay" status which helped them to survive with no income until schools reopen again. Many teachers have been out of work since mid-March 2020 when the Education Ministry ordered schools across the country to shut down. Therefore, when there are no classes, they do not get paid. Most Filipino teachers are affected by this problem and experienced no work, no pay set-up, though some Filipino teachers are hired through agencies (Mala, 2020). Their struggle for life in a foreign country is real in order to survive in the teaching profession amidst this new normal setting. Despite the challenges that Filipino teachers encounter in teaching outside of the Philippines, their constructs of the nature of good teaching includes personality-based trait dispositions and teaching competence-based dispositions which are deeply rooted in Filipino cultural ideals and values (Bustos-Orosa, 2008).

In this regard, the researcher considered in this study the personal reasons of the Filipino teachers, specifically the Teacher Education graduates of NIPSC for working in the Kingdom of Thailand as well as their struggles to prove their worth as professionals to realize their dreams and aspirations in life. The researcher also wanted to know how the Filipino teachers survived the challenges in their profession caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. Their lived experiences could be considered a phenomenon and could best serve as an inspiration to other Filipino teachers to bring out the best in themselves in terms of employment. The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

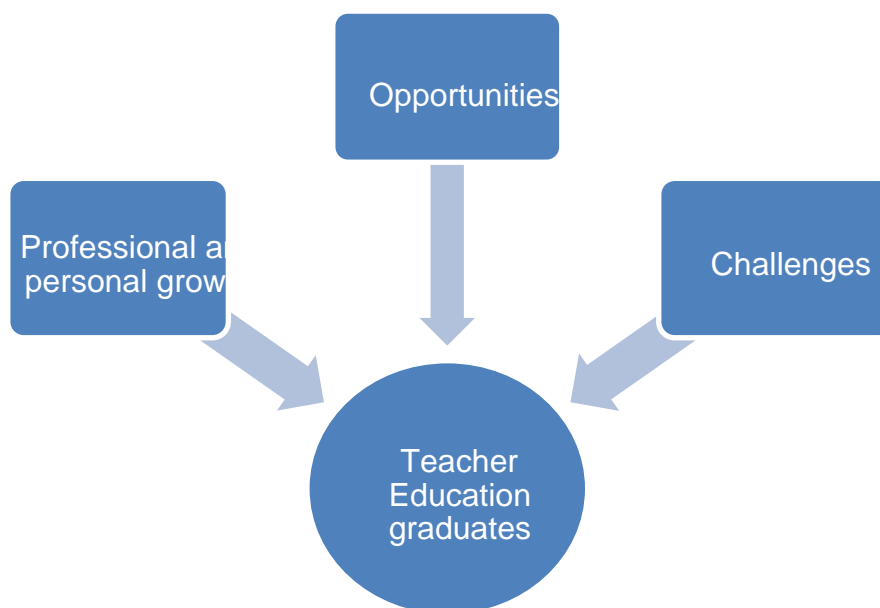


Figure 1: The conceptual framework is presented in

II Method

Research Design

This phenomenological study explored the lives and experiences of Filipino teachers specifically Teacher Education graduates working as public and private teachers in the Kingdom of Thailand. Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that the specific focus is to identify the inherent and unchanging in the meaning of the issue under study (Kakkori, 2009). This present study utilized bracketing strategy to demonstrate the

validity of the data collection and analysis process. The researchers put aside “knowledge, beliefs, values and experiences in order to accurately describe the participants’ life experiences (Kakkori, 2009)”.

This present study also sought to understand the various experiences of Filipino teachers from their application to employment, adjustments to a foreign culture, peers, students, and the community. The personal and professional development undertaken, the struggles and the issues confronting them as foreign workers, and how they cope with change during the pandemic were also presented.

Participants

The location of the study is the Kingdom of Thailand, specifically at Plapak District, Nakhon Phanom Province; Bangkok; Huahin, Prachuapkhirkhan; Amphur Mueang, Sisaket; and Chonburi. The researcher purposely-selected seven (7) Filipino teachers from Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College currently teaching in the Kingdom of Thailand who were chosen because they are all Teacher Education (TED) Graduates, they are teaching in private or public schools in Thai schools, they are accessible to the researcher through online medium such as Facebook and messenger, and they are the only TED graduates in Thailand as per information traced by the researcher. Only five (5) out of seven (7) were considered as participants since they were those who responded to the invitation of the researcher. There were two females and three males; teaching in the elementary level during the conduct of the study. One participant is a Bachelor of Secondary Education graduate while the four others were Bachelor of Elementary Education graduates. One female participant has nine years teaching experience, the other one has two (2) years teaching experience, while the three male participants have 10-12 years of teaching experience. As to status of employment, two participants were on permanent status, two are on contractual status, and one on temporary status. Two of the participants are teaching in the private schools while the three are teaching in the government school, private bilingual school, and public school.

Research Instrument

The researcher utilized researcher-made and semi-structured questionnaire among participants to gather answers based on their experiences and situations through an open mindset. The questionnaire was sent through online medium, the Messenger. Answers were done in narrative and sent back to the researcher for thematic analysis and interpretation.

Data Gathering Procedure

To conduct this study, the researcher sent information to the participants that they were chosen to participate in this study based on the following criteria: graduates of the Teacher Education Program of NIPSC and employed as teachers in the Kingdom of Thailand. To gather the data, interview questions were sent via messenger. Bracketing strategy was utilized to demonstrate validity in phenomenology (Chan, Fung, and Chien, 2013). Thorough planning for doing bracketing in this study was done before the data collection and analysis process, to determine the sequential relationship of data. Answers were gathered in the form of a narrative which were encoded and interpreted to identify the themes. Participants were also coded to protect their identities and only the researchers have sole access to the data will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be utilized for this study alone. However some of the participants were not able to answer all the eleven questions sent through messenger so they were left blank during the thematic analysis and interpretation. The study was conducted from June 2020 to June 2021 and each participant was given two weeks to answer the interview. Follow-up interviews were also done and messages were sent for three months and more due to the pandemic since some of them were not able to send back their answers on time.

Ethical Considerations

This study observed the following ethical principles throughout the conduct of the study:

Right to Self-Determination. The participants were given full autonomy to decide as to whether they may participate or may not in this research study without compulsion. The researchers respected and accepted their refusal to participate in this study. Right to Full Disclosure. The participants received accurate and understandable explanations of the purpose of this research. Answers of the participants were sent back in the form of a narrative which were encoded and interpreted to identify the themes. Participants were told that their responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be utilized for this study alone. The participants were coded to hide their identities.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data gathered from the participants were analyzed and discussed based on themes.

Theme 1. Opportunities

Job Application and Preparation

Participant 1 was referred by a friend under Thai agency and has attended seminar and orientation regarding policies and regulations of the school before the school semester started. In line with this, the school head discussed with him ways to develop teaching strategies, teaching materials, and maintaining classroom discipline. He said he will just continue teaching in Thailand wherein he can have his own

“personal income to develop his personal advancement by having personal business.”

Participant 2 had her aunt and uncle came first to Thailand to venture in teaching job, and they facilitated her coming to this country. She believed that all the knowledge, skills, and talents he acquired during her student days made her “fully-equipped and well-prepared to do the job”. It did not come easy for her but was “a stand out among the applicants during the teaching demonstration and panel interview”. She is almost nine years in her present school and “earned the trust and confidence” of her peers and administrators. She started rough making all the adjustments yet managed her sails “but complacent to just let it that way for there are still challenges that arise and I know that there is always room for improvement. I am now in the management team and looking forward to be in the higher position.”

Participant 3 had his sister-in-law recommend him to the manager/co-owner of the school. He “prayed for God’s guidance for safety and good health, and for wisdom and knowledge to teach well” and believed that motivation is very important. His future plans are: “to save money first and then think about a good business (in our country), and study for my master’s degree in education.”

Participant 4 was able to find a job through his co-church member. He did not prepare much but brought with him “overflowing self-confidence and fervent prayer to stand out as an effective teacher”. He said he was trapped in a profession he does not like in the first place because he wants to become a flight attendant, though he did not belittle this (teaching) profession which had helped him through thick and thin. “I will pursue this profession instead of pushing myself to being a flight attendant which I think is not really for me. I also plan to work at factories and restaurants if there are opportunities and to fulfill my greatest desires which are to give my family a beautiful house to stay and build my own coffee shop.”

Participant 5 found a job through direct application. She prepared all the documents needed for applying a work visa and studied the educational system of Thailand. She foresees herself participating in a professional organization and she is very open to whatever future opportunities her company may offer. She is proud of herself for being flexible and adaptable and since “the best way of planning for the future is to make the most of the present.” She thought to apply for this teaching job because it is a perfect fit with her skill set.

The five participants have different experiences of landing a teaching job in the Kingdom of Thailand. It can be considered a great opportunity to apply and be qualified in a teaching job, especially in a foreign country although there are lots of things to consider such as family, qualifications, preparation, and culture. To be professionally qualified for a teaching job, it is important to be prepared mentally, emotionally, physically, and psychologically so that one can deliver tasks and responsibilities very well. Being in Thailand is indeed an opportunity to practice one’s teaching profession and other greater things to do in life for personal and professional advancement.

Teaching may not give teachers more monetary compensation but it is regarded as one of the noblest mission, vocation, and profession in the world which contributes mainly to non-material satisfaction (Rogayan, 2018). This present study conforms with the study of Rogayan (2028) which stressed that young Filipino teachers teach to bring about positive change among their learners, prepare them for real life, serve as inspiration, promote values, transform lives, teach passionately, set a higher bar of excellence in education, solve social problems, share knowledge and skills, and enable others to realize their dreams and aspirations. On the other hand, Education International, in its global survey in 2014, reported that one of the key findings of teacher migration and mobility is that migrant teachers take risks to support their families, improve their status of living, or advance their careers. Teaching is considered as an avenue for traveling the world, discovering new cultures, and acquiring intercultural competencies for people who choose to teach abroad (Chacko & Lin, 2015 in Uytico and Abadiano, 2020). It is also believed that teaching in foreign countries is an interesting possibility for those seeking employment opportunities abroad (Hauerwas, Skawinski, & Ryan, 2017, in Uytico and Abadiano, 2020). Tables 1 and 2 show the responses of the participants.

Table 1. Process of Job Application

Participants	Responses
1	Referred by a friend under Thai agency
2	Invited by her aunt and uncle who first ventured in teaching in Thailand
3	Sister-in-law’s recommendation to the manager/co-owner of the school
4	Co-church member
5	Direct application

Table 2. Preparation for the Job

Participants	Responses
1	Attended seminar and orientation regarding the policies and regulations of the school. A discussion on how to develop teaching strategies, teaching materials, maintain classroom discipline was done by the employer
2	Believed she is fully-equipped with in her knowledge, skills, and talents acquired in her studies. Determined to outstand other applicants during teaching demos and panel interviews
3	Prayed for God's guidance to be safe and healthy; to be given wisdom and knowledge. Motivated himself to do his best.
4	Overflowing confidence and fervent prayer to become an effective teacher
5	Prepared all documents needed for working visa. Studied education system of Thailand

Theme 2. Challenges

Problems encountered with students and coping strategies, problems encountered with fellow teachers and coping strategies, homesickness and coping strategies, problems encountered during the pandemic and coping strategies and measures.

Participant 1 encountered students who are unwilling to learn, not having interest in the lesson, and with lack of communication in the classroom. He handled these by giving class activities which can develop their interest and engage them towards hands-on activities with the use of critical thinking and oral communication skills. He did not see any problem since students were able to comply with every assignment given to them. He thought the only problem with his Thai fellows is the communication since most of them could not speak and understand the English language, and he is just showing a good relationship towards them. He is living with the school's accommodation at Plapak District, Nakhon Phanom Province wherein electricity, water, and things needed are provided and is located at the back of the school building. He was not able to encounter difficulties since all the things he needed are well-provided and the market is just a walking distance away from his school. He said that it is normal to feel sad and homesick sometimes since he is living away from his family but "with the help of Internet and smart phones" they usually talked. He also said COVID 19 has brought a lot of difficulties in every family most especially to an OFW like him; it affected his source of income and special and tutorial classes so he cannot fully provide the needs of his parents and siblings. And since he is living far away from his family, he does not know what will happen to them at the present situations. Instead, he will just continue doing good in his classes, join his friends to unwind from working for several months, although they cannot go outside of their place as they need to safeguard themselves. This pandemic also caused psychological effects such as lack of interaction with other people. Accordingly, the Department of Education of Thailand proposed for online classes to continue providing quality education to students using Google classroom to cover up the lessons that are supposedly be taught every month. However, it is on trial and error because some students could not have online learning materials such as stable connectivity, PCs, and smart phones.

Participant 2 had observed a huge distinction to Thai system of education compared to that in the Philippines. In her school, it is fine to include in one class the SPED and normal students due to their "no discrimination" culture and religious practices. They have also a peculiar way in grading system for they follow a no-failure policy in which everyone in the class must move up. She had issues about culture and truly considered this especially in providing activities that involve movements and touching because there are certain body parts that are not allowed to be touched like the head; "a male teacher should never touch his girl student not even a tap". However, she has no problem when it comes to ways, traits, behaviors, and work ethics. In her tenure of work in Thailand, she perceived that "Filipinos are far more innovative, diligent, and resourceful enough in every teaching endeavor" compared to Thai teachers. She is presently living in a condominium in Bangkok which is a couple of miles away from the main city where everything is accessible like shopping malls, wet market, grocery stores, schools, and hospitals. She has not encountered any problem in the place she lives. Homesickness is not in her book anymore because she has her own growing family now and her parents are living with her in Thailand, though she missed her relatives and friends, her town, the city, Filipino foods, and her alma mater, NIPSC.

Participant 3 encountered attitude and behavior problems and language as a barrier, as well as reading comprehension skills. He also encountered crab mentality and jealousy among his fellow teachers. To overcome this challenge, he let his students know his rules and regulations inside and outside of the classroom,

always motivated them to study harder, and let them realize the importance of learning for personal and professional advancement. He does not have a choice but accept the teaching assignments with all his heart without complain and just do his best to teach well every day. The system of the school is a bit difficult and some teachers did not treat him well during his starting years especially since he was a newbie. Instead, he thought about the positivity and good vibes every day, and ignored his colleagues who are not good to him. With that, he was able to show them some respect, which in turn, made them respect him. He did his work with utmost professionalism. He has been living for a decade in Huahin City in Prachuapkhirikhan province which is one of the famous places in Thailand and is similar to Boracay Island in the Philippines which is best for outing and relaxation with amazing artistic temples to visit. "This is a peaceful city and I really love to live here or even spend my vacation." He found difficulty in transportation since riding motorbikes or small jeepney called "Toktok" is expensive, so he bought his own motorbike. He also suffered from homesickness during his first year in Thailand. It was a bit difficult especially dealing with the locales because he needed to converse in English. He was also new to the taste of Thai food, so he could not eat well. He recalled a moment that he cried, but he was thankful to God for His guidance; he prayed every time he felt sad and bad and he believes that "prayer is one of the powerful weapons in the world". To overcome homesickness, he tried his very best to work well and found some friends to help him to build his "self-confidence." He is supposed to go back home to the Philippines because he missed his family a lot, but because of this pandemic it was canceled. He just stayed at home most of the time and observed proper health protocol. He was totally worried especially when his school decided to open and he is not sure what to do. "I am not sure if my students are CoVid-free because they came from different places of this country." He just made himself calm since the school has its own precautions and safety measures. His school had safety and precautions implemented to students and teachers focusing on personal hygiene and good grooming such as taking a shower every day, before going to school and after school (the moment we arrived at home, we must take a shower); wear face shield and mask every time especially during their classes; and bring alcohol always. Their classrooms were cleaned by janitors and they have scheduled time to turn on and turn off the air conditioners. Each table in every classroom has its own shield and social distancing is highly emphasized. "We let our students tick their own work, clean up (sanitize) their table after each of their classes, and we totally (tell them to) avoid hanging out with each other during break time and let them follow social distancing. For now, their school is back to normal because the Kingdom of Thailand announced already that they are CoVid-free locally."

Sharing her experiences, Participant 4 was surprised to learn when she arrived at school, that the foreign teacher's office was separate from the Thai teachers and she could hardly interact with them. During her first week of teaching, she felt like a "rock star". She had the undivided attention because she was new and "they were so excited to hear what I had to say. I used PowerPoint in all of my classes and I have access to every resource possible. All Thai schools are different and everyone has different experiences so it is not good to compare your school, students, or experiences with others. Culture shock is real and it hits you at the worst times. Embrace it and talk to your family and friends about it." She has encountered language barrier and the books they are using in school are "not aligned with the school curriculum". Instead, she made lesson plans based on the contents of the books intended to reach the learning capacity of the learners. She is staying in Chonburi, one of the biggest provinces in Thailand which is near Bangkok and is very accessible with walking distance malls and bus terminals. She had not encountered any difficulty in her place since the days she arrived and was not able to experience homesickness because she "always reach out" to her family and friends. During the first three months of pandemic, she earned only half of her monthly salary which can sustain her needs for the next months. The school owner proposed to use online platform in teaching so the teachers earned extra income aside from the salary, they were encouraged to use online platform in teaching and both teachers and students benefit from it.

Participant 5 said teachers cannot avoid different behaviors of the students such as "naughty, talkative, and disrespectful" which he encountered but normal in the teaching field. He considered the teaching assignment as the "hardest part" because whenever he gives homework, only few students pass the outputs. He tried to understand that matter because most of the people, especially parents coming from the provinces do not know how to speak English much so perhaps they could not help their children in their homework. He was not able to encounter any problem at all because his fellow teachers have been accommodating, very welcoming, and very kind especially his fellow adviser in the classroom who has been with him for ten years. Among the problems of foreign teachers in Thailand are the students, and he was able to encounter that kind of problem. At first, it was hard for him to adjust teaching Grade 2 students but as the years passed, he eventually got their attention "by giving them incentives and finding ways to make them smile and happy." She is living in Amphur Mueang, Sisaket, a small and peaceful province in which everywhere is accessible such as malls, parks, and markets that are just a few meters away. Fruits, vegetables, and rice in this province are pretty cheaper compared to other provinces. He also bought his own motorbike since most of the people in the province used to go anywhere with their motorbikes and cars. "At first, it was hard for me to walk to school or to the market because I feel

shy. Seldom can you see the locales walking on the street not like in the Philippines. But when I had my personal motorbike, things have gotten easier.” He cannot assure everyone that Thailand is really for them but he can commend that this country can create enormous spaces in ones’ heart; it is a memorable place for teaching career or just plain vacation. He added that Thailand is “for someone who wants to have a BIG SMILE on his/her face as this has been denoted as “the Land of Smiles’. He wanted everyone to remember that failure will never overtake someone if the determination to succeed is strong enough, “so better go confidently in the direction of your dreams and live the life you have imagined.” Many things were affected by this pandemic such as work, personal business, and health and has caused a lot of troubles and problems though on the “spiritual aspect, it is a wake-up call to everyone to be closer to our Almighty Creator, to seek His guidance and protection amidst this pandemic”. Media brought a lot of negative effects to humanity but has also brought positive impact to some circumstances. Obeying government’s policies, maintaining personal hygiene, and self-precautions were some of the measures that are keeping everyone safe. They were also able to continuously deliver education through online classes using media. Indeed, the surge of the COVID-19 pandemic has created big impacts on the mental health of Filipino teachers in Thailand.

If those challenges are never resolved they can cause strong reactions and stress (Kowitzwanij, 2020). To survive in a teaching job at a foreign country is an achievement considering that language is a barrier, culture is different, and the impression of being a foreign teacher quite makes a mark. The participants of this study had encountered varied challenges as teachers to their students, with their teaching assignments, and with their fellow teachers, and being far away from home, but they have their own ways of coping with these challenges.

The results of this study conform with the findings of Frederiksen (2014) that the primary roles of Filipino teachers is to teach communication and literacy skills; the reasons why teachers have chosen to work abroad are higher salary rates and better working conditions. However, the lack of knowledge of the local culture, poor communication skills, and expertise of the local language are considered weaknesses. In contrast, positive attitude towards teaching English abroad shows the importance of English in global communication.

The findings of Ulla (2018) revealed that though Filipino teachers were positive regarding the teaching of English to Thai students, they perceived that English language teaching is a challenging task because of students' lack of interest in the English language, lack of exposure to and support for an English speaking environment, unclear and unsuitable English language curriculum, and lack of professional development. The study of de Mesa and de Guzman (2006) also showed that pedagogical practices which still verge toward what is considered formal and suggests a traditional inclination. However, the importance of change should be realized since various concepts of teaching and learning, today, are imperative. They found out that teachers must be re-socialized on their new roles and make their students have a more active role in the teaching-learning process.

Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 show the responses of the participants.

Table 3. Problems Encountered with Learners and Coping Strategies

Participants	Problems Encountered	Coping Strategies
1	Unwillingness to learn No interest Lacks communication inside the classroom Inability to speak and understand in English	Gives activities that could develop interest and engage learners to hands-on activities to develop critical thinking, ability to speak Shows good relationship with learners
2	Peculiar grading system; no failure policy Everyone including students with special needs should move up Class combines normal and SPED learners	Innovate and observe diligence Understand learners’ need and use resources to teach effectively
3	Attitudes and attitudes towards learning Language barrier Comprehension skills	Impose classroom rules and regulations Motivates students to study and learn better Let learners realize the importance of learning in their life
4	Naughty, talkative, and disrespectful learners Only few learners pass their assignments	Considered learners’ behavior as normal to the teaching field Understand the learners since most of them have parents who do not speak English
5	Language barrier Books used in school are not aligned with the school curriculum	Make lesson plans on the contents of the books intended to reach the learning capacity of the learners

Table 4. Problems Encountered with Co-Teachers and Coping Strategies

Participants	Problems Encountered	Coping Strategies
1	Communication with Thai teachers since almost all of them cannot speak and do not understand English language	Showed good relationship with them
2	None	Filipino teachers are understandable in their traits, behaviors, and working ethics
3	Crab mentality and jealousy	Ignored them and did my work well with integrity and honesty
4	None	They have been accommodating, very welcoming, very kind
5	Language barrier	None

Table 5. Homesickness and Coping Strategies

Participants	Problems Encountered	Coping Strategies
1	Sadness	Communicate using internet and smart phones
2	Miss relatives, friends, town, city, Filipino food, alma Mater	Bond with the growing family and parents are also in Thailand
3	Cried because of sadness	Prayed for guidance; went to church; find new friends
4	None	None
5	None	Reach out to family and friends

Table 6. Pandemic and Coping Strategies and Measures

Participants	Problems Encountered	Coping Strategies and Measures
1	None	None
2	None	None
3	Cancelled trip back home; missed family	Made himself feel calm, follow school's precautionary measures
4	Work, health, personal business; negative effects of mass media	Obey government policies, maintain personal hygiene Continue to deliver education through online classes
5	Financial problem	Teach using online platform; Practice good hygiene

Theme 3. Personal and Professional Growth

The Filipino teachers in Thailand are as important as other migrant workers in other parts of the globe because of their contributions to the Philippine economy. Furthermore, their role in nation-building through education of the youth in their host country cannot be disregarded. As a receiving/host country, Thailand benefitted from Filipino teachers; the skills they acquire are also given back to the Thai students. As a sending country, the Philippines receives monthly remittances from Filipinos working abroad thus, strengthening the purchasing power of the individuals in the micro-level. In the end, the skills and knowledge gained by Filipino teachers will be useful in the Philippines if they choose to come home. The Filipino teachers take all the opportunities offered to them for professional development which is nearly impossible to achieve if they remain in the Philippines. Despite homesickness, depressions, inability to speak the language, and other challenges, Filipino teachers in Thailand remain optimistic in their search for "greener pasture" thus finding this in Thailand as the pull factor. Though more arrived in in this country as tourists and became illegals, according to the definition of the Philippine government of legal workers, the Filipino teachers were able to become legal in both countries by following the laws prescribed by the immigration.

Participant 1, perceived that those who are interested to teach in Thailand must be strong to fight sadness, more patient when dealing with students, and more friendly and helpful in every school activity. Participant 2 added that global competition is becoming tight so it is an edge always to be fully equipped with skills learned and

acquired from college because “as an educator, we should have a greater confidence, talents, skills, patience, and be God-fearing.”

Working in a faraway land enabled Filipino teachers to work hard for their personal and professional growth. They have earned the trust and confidence of their superiors and fellow teachers, have proven their worth in the teaching profession, have good communication skills, sound judgment over matters, developed patience and maturity, and found achievements in themselves, thus proving that they can be at par with other teachers in Thailand when it comes to knowledge, skills, abilities, and talents. Most of all, the Filipino teachers could blend well with other cultures, are God-fearing, and strong to overcome the trials of their lives in a foreign country. In addition, they have saved money for themselves or for some business they intend to have and had sent money to their families in the Philippines. Another important thing the participants have found out is that the locales are good and friendly people with good hearts, the food are delicious, though spicy, the commodities are cheap, and there are lots of beautiful places to visit.

For teachers who experience frustration, dissatisfaction, or disappointment, they may have to shift negative thoughts into positive by applying self-regulation strategies by surrounding themselves with people with the right attitudes, adapting to the environment, and reinforcing themselves. When the teachers encounter some low proficient and demotivated students, pedagogical strategies could help teachers act positively such as being flexible in teaching, giving direct feedback to students, integrating activities, and being well prepared in the lesson (Balintag, 2022)..

With the advancement of technology, internet accessibility provides easy communication at home and in the workplace. The unfamiliar cultures of other countries seemed a click away and globalization extended its reach to education. Today, learning institutions became more open to foreign students and teachers. In fact, Lacco-O et al. (2018 in Uytico and Abadiano, 2020) stated that millennial teachers dominate most schools in the Philippines during this age of technology. Spiegel (2013 in Uytico and Abadiano, 2020) also described the millennial generation as “people whose world is driven by technology as information and social networking at their fingertips are their way of life”. It is evident that millennials excel in multi-tasking and in technology-use (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Underwood, 2007, in Uytico and Abadiano, 2020) and they are so relaxed performing in a collaborative environment while integrating technology in their teaching-learning activities. On the other hand, the study of Bustos-Orosa (2008) pointed out that the nature of good teaching among Filipino teachers involve personality-based trait dispositions and teaching competence-based dispositions which are deeply-rooted in Filipino culture, ideals, and values. Table 7 shows the responses of the participants.

Table 7. Personal and Professional Growth

Participants	Plans for Personal and Professional Growth
1	Continue teaching in Thailand Have personal business to have another income and for personal advancement
2	Have earned the trust and confidence of the colleagues Already part of the management team
3	Save money and think about good business to put up in the Philippines Study master’s degree in Education
4	Work in factories and restaurants Give family a beautiful house and build own coffee shop
5	Participate in a professional organization

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This present study found out that Filipino teachers in Thailand considered working as a great opportunity and a struggle. The participants are mostly Bachelor in Elementary Education graduates who have almost 10 years of experience as teachers assigned at the public and private schools in the neighboring towns and provinces of the Kingdom. As to job status, only two participants were permanent while the three were temporary and contractual. Four of them found the teaching job through recommendations of family and friends and only one through direct application. Their salaries are good enough for their daily needs since food are not so expensive and they can still send to their families in the Philippines.

Filipino teachers have met a lot of challenges and most of them are problems with students wherein they encountered unwillingness to learn, language barrier, disrespectful and unruly attitudes. As to problems with fellow teachers, most of them encountered language barrier and professional jealousy, experienced homesickness, sadness, and adjustment with the spicy Thai food, and have problems with transportation because fare is expensive. In addition, COVID 19 had caused another challenge for them which affected their work and their income including personal sideline and extra jobs, yet they preferred to go to church to pray and

follow safety protocols to ensure that they will be free of the virus. Due to the effect this pandemic caused to the education system, their respective school administrators advised them to use online platform and observe safety measures in their classrooms and offices.

This study shows the struggles of the Filipino teachers to live a meaningful life in the Kingdom of Thailand amidst pandemic and their perception that regardless where they came from, they can blend with the locales, can adopt with the culture, their fellow teachers and students, and be at par with other teachers in terms of oral and written communication skills, skills, and talents. Most of all, they have kept their faith in God and maintain their good values and the good relationship with their fellow teachers regardless of nationality as well as the community they live in. Their struggle to be the best versions of themselves have paid well, they have found their inner strengths amidst adversity and showed the world that they are resilient.

It is therefore recommended that Filipino teachers, especially Teacher Education graduates of NIPSC, may draw inspiration from the perception and lived experiences of Filipino teachers in the Kingdom of Thailand, gain confidence in themselves, apply knowledge and skills in the real world, and do their best in their personal and professional endeavors. Graduates of the Teacher Education Department may take a look into their employment in other countries and share to the learners and teachers of the world the knowledge, skills, and expertise they have gained from NIPSC. The faculty members of the Teacher Education Department of NIPSC may consider to maintain and/or improve their teaching modalities, strategies, and course content to continue to produce quality graduates who could compete in the global arena, not only in Asia. Similar studies could be conducted and may include other variables not included in this study.

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