



WHAT MAKES TEACHERS STAY: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the factors that influenced veteran teachers to remain in private schools despite the continuing challenges associated with private education. Specifically, it examined the challenges encountered and the opportunities experienced by private school teachers who had rendered more than 15 years of service in their respective institutions. The study employed a qualitative case study design anchored on constructionism and symbolic interactionism. Four veteran private school teachers from sectarian and non-sectarian schools in Iloilo served as informants and were selected through purposive and snowball sampling. The data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, supported by triangulation responses from colleagues or superiors. The interview data were transcribed, analyzed, and organized into within-case and cross-case themes. The findings revealed that the teachers experienced several challenges, including heavy workload, multiple teaching preparations, salary limitations, administrative demands, parent-related pressures, technological adjustment, and work-family tension. Despite these difficulties, they remained in private school because of meaningful retention anchors such as spiritual formation, institutional belonging, supportive colleagues, professional growth, academic freedom, student affirmation, family-centered benefits, and scholarships for teachers' children. The cross-case

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analysis showed that retention was not caused by the absence of challenges but by the presence of stronger personal, relational, professional, spiritual, and practical reasons for staying. The study concluded that teacher retention in private schools is a meaning-based and context-bound decision shaped by interaction of school culture, support systems, professional identity, and personal life circumstances. It is recommended that private schools develop more holistic, family-sensitive, and teacher-centered retention practices that address workload, recognition, professional development, benefits, and workplace culture.

Keywords: *teacher retention, private schools, veteran teachers, job satisfaction, school culture, qualitative case study*

INTRODUCTION

As mandated by the 1987 Philippine Constitution, it is the duty of the state to provide quality education to the citizens of the country. Furthermore, through RA 8545, also known as the Expanded Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education Act (E-GASTPE), the state recognizes the critical role of the private educational institutions and emphasizes the need for mechanisms that sustain quality education within this sector. With this collaborative effort, the stability of the teaching workforce is a primary concern in ensuring a consistent quality instruction. It is fundamental to retain experienced educators, as high turnover disrupts continuity and necessitates costly investment in teacher recruitment and training (Sumipo, 2020).

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Teachers play a significant role in the lives of their students. Their influence is not just in the imparting of knowledge, but by serving as second parents, role models, and motivators. Experienced teachers positively affect the performance of the learners (Dublas & Genuba, 2023) and their motivation and satisfaction are essential to the growth of the school institution (Cabasal, et. al., 2025). The ability to develop a successful school relies to the ability to attract and retain quality teachers. Higher retention rates give confidence to different educational stakeholders, especially the learners and parents (Sumipo, 2020).

Despite their importance, private school institutions face significant challenges particularly at the start of every school year when many private school teachers transfer to public institutions for better benefits (Hernando-Malipot, 2018 as cited by Cardino & Naparan, 2023). In the Philippine setting, most teachers make the private school institution a stepping stone to gain experience before they apply for a teaching position in public schools and even abroad. Small private schools are not attractive to education graduates or teachers due to low compensation in comparison to the public schools (Aduna et al., 2020 as cited by Saldevia & Pedroso, 2025). While various reasons have been identified, such as low salary, lack of teachers' motivation, communication gap between management and teachers, workload, and absence of career path for teachers, there are those who remain to stay. This suggests that the fulfillment of one's profession and vocation does not solely rely on the financial rewards one could obtain.

In the literature of this study, factors related to job satisfaction of the teachers are identified. Employees' job satisfaction is vital in the organization. Those who are satisfied with

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their job, not only become productive and build relationship, but remain in the organization.

Unable to meet job satisfaction could result to employee's disengagement (Hagwood, 2023).

Teachers' turnover has a negative impact on the private schools, especially in school expenses since they need to train newly hired teachers for quality education. To mitigate this turnover risk, private school systems in the Philippines actively implement various retention policies. This includes public-private partnership program managed by Philippines Education Assistance Committee (PEAC) by providing Teacher Salary Subsidy (TSS) to bridge the gap in salary. Additionally, private institutions invest to support the professional development of the teachers through structured In-Service Training (INSET) and graduate study assistance.

While numerous researches have presented the factors of teacher attrition and the challenges the private school teachers face (EDCOM 2, 2024; Sumipo, 2020), there is insufficient qualitative information about veteran educators who stayed in their profession for more than 15 years.

This study about the factors why teachers stay in the private school organization was conceived due to the reason that quality education should be offered both in the public and private schools. In addition, it seeks to fill the gaps by investigating the factors that grounded the teachers to stay in the private sectors while demonstrating enduring commitment to the teaching profession.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design and Methodological Perspective

The study employed a qualitative research design to explore the complex realities of teacher retention. The researcher used a case study design, grounded in the interpretive school of thought which are the constructionism and symbolic interactionism.

Participants of the Study

The study was conducted among selected private schools in Iloilo City and the Province of Iloilo. The informants were four veteran private school teachers who have stayed in their current schools for more than fifteen years. Two informants were from sectarian schools, while two were from non-sectarian private schools. This distribution allowed the study to examine teacher retention across different school cultures.

Sampling Design

The study employed the purposive sampling method to intentionally select participants who met the criteria relevant to the research questions, objectives, and purpose of the study (Tracy, 2013).

Snowball sampling was also used because veteran private school teachers who met the criteria were not easy to locate. The researcher initially identified possible informants and then relied on referrals to find other qualified participants. This process helped ensure that the informants had sufficient experience to provide rich descriptions of long-term private school teaching.

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Research Instrument

The primary data source consisted of semi-structured interviews with the four teacher-informants. The interview guide was self-constructed and was designed to gather information about the informants' personal background, teaching journey, school culture, challenges, opportunities, and reasons for staying.

A second semi-structured guide was developed for triangulation. This guide was answered in writing by a colleague or superior who could verify the informants' profiles and provide an external perspective on the opportunities, school practices, challenges, and support systems within the school. The use of triangulation helped strengthen the credibility of the findings by comparing the informants' narratives with another school-based perspective.

Validity of the Research Instrument

The interview guide was subjected to expert validation before the actual data gathering. Experts in research and educational management reviewed the guide to determine whether the questions were aligned with the purpose of the study and whether they were clear, relevant, and appropriate for the informants. Suggestions from validators were incorporated to improve the organization, wording, and depth of the questions.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data gathering procedure for this study was done in six distinct phases to ensure ethical compliance, participant privacy, and data integrity. This includes securing of permits,

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identifying the informants, distribution of informed consent, conduct of interviews, triangulation, and verbatim transcription of data.

Data Analyses

The researcher utilized the case study analysis as methodological data analysis following the five-phase procedure outlined by Yin (2016) for an in-depth, contextual investigation of the phenomenon. The analysis followed a systematic process of the following phases: Compiling of data, disassembling of data, reassembling the data, interpreting the data, and concluding the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study presented within-case and cross-case analyses of four informants: Teacher Benedict, Ms. Faithful Star, Mr. Veteran Historian, and Ms. Science Mom.

Within-Case Analysis: Each case revealed a unique narrative shaped by the teacher's personal experience.

Case 1: Teacher Benedict

Teacher Benedict has been teaching for 16 years in his current sectarian private school and served for 16 years in a previous private school. His work is characterized by heavy teaching loads with multiple preparations and an expanded role as a religious educator and formation leader. Despite facing strict institutional policies, he finds retention anchored in his spiritual vocation, and the affirmation he receives from his students.

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Case 2: Ms. Faithful Star

Ms. Faithful Star taught in sectarian private school for 34 years teaching Science subject. Her teaching journey includes navigating a significant salary gap compared to the public institution as well as managing heavy workload. She also adjusted to technological shift especially during the time of the pandemic. She remains committed in the private school because she views it as her "second home," supported by positive school culture and collegial relationship.

Case 3: Mr. Veteran Historian

Mr. Veteran Historian has served for 25 years in a private non-sectarian school and teaching Araling Panlipunan and Philosophy. His private school experience involves responding to high demands of the institution and internal accreditation and audits. He remained in the institution because of the family-like culture, academic freedom, support in professional development, and compensation that he perceives as favorable.

Case 4: Ms. Science Mom

Ms. Science Mom is a Science teacher and Science Coordinator who has served for 17 years in a private non-sectarian school. Her tenure has been marked by continuous adaptation in the curriculum, shift to the use of technology, and emotional labor of managing parent demands. Her primary retention anchors are the practical family-centered benefits such as HMO coverage and scholarship for her children, which help her balance her career and motherhood.

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Cross-Case Analysis of Challenges

Across all four cases, the teachers identified persistent challenges such as heavy workloads, parent-as-client demands, strict policies and audit pressures. These challenges create a stressful environment but they are not the bases for turnover.

Cross-Case Analysis of Opportunities

Conversely, the teachers identified opportunities as factors that promote retention. These include school culture and belonging, professional growth, teacher autonomy, and recognition. Retention is shaped by personal life circumstances, such as family responsibilities and career stage.

Data Triangulation and Validation

To ensure trustworthiness, the informants' responses were cross-referenced with written responses from superiors or colleagues. This triangulation verified the informants' accounts including the school support systems, challenges, and opportunities.

Implications

Theoretical and Epistemological Implications

This study carries significant implications adding literature to job satisfaction and retention particularly when viewed in the lens of Constructionism and Symbolic Interactionism.

The idea of retention often operates as a purely economic framework, assuming that employee turnover is driven by material benefits such as salary and other monetary benefits

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based on the workload of the employees. This study challenges such assumption by demonstrating that retention is fundamentally interpretive and subjective process. In the lens of Constructionism, the findings show that reality is constructed through shared experiences. Teachers do not just give up or quit when faced with financial deficiency like the gap in the salary in the public and private institution. Instead, they choose to focus on the personal, spiritual and family rewards that make all their hard work truly worth it.

Through the lens of Symbolic Interactionism, this study implies that school rules and programs are not just mere administrative policies, but symbols of care, trust, and community that give deep personal meaning to their daily working experience. A school is symbolically transformed from being a workplace into a pastoral ministry where shared vision becomes part of a teacher's mission. It becomes a second home where family can be found based on daily interactions, administrative care, and student affirmation. When an institution successfully fosters these cultural anchors, it creates a commitment that helps teachers against stress, burnout, and low salary.

Furthermore, the study implies that teacher retention is personal and may change over time. Schools cannot use a one-size-fits-all plan to keep a teacher, for retention depends on their current stage in life. Unmarried teachers may anchor their stay on spiritual vocation, or a mother through discounts of their children's tuition fees.

Practical Implications

Administrators should realize that teacher loyalty does equate to infinite overextension of workload. While spiritual formation and positive school culture are strong anchors of teacher

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retention, they do not replace the need for fair distribution of tasks, dialogues, and professional autonomy. Rigid and coercive school policies may strip away professional trust and undermine the positive and family culture the school has designed for the veteran teachers.

Additionally, retention strategies should pivot towards total rewards package rather than focusing only on base salary. When competing with the public school salary and benefits, private institutions should focus in optimizing retention by emphasizing high-impact benefits that targets life-stage needs such as comprehensive health benefits (HMOs), tuition scholarships, and genuine, accessible professional development support.

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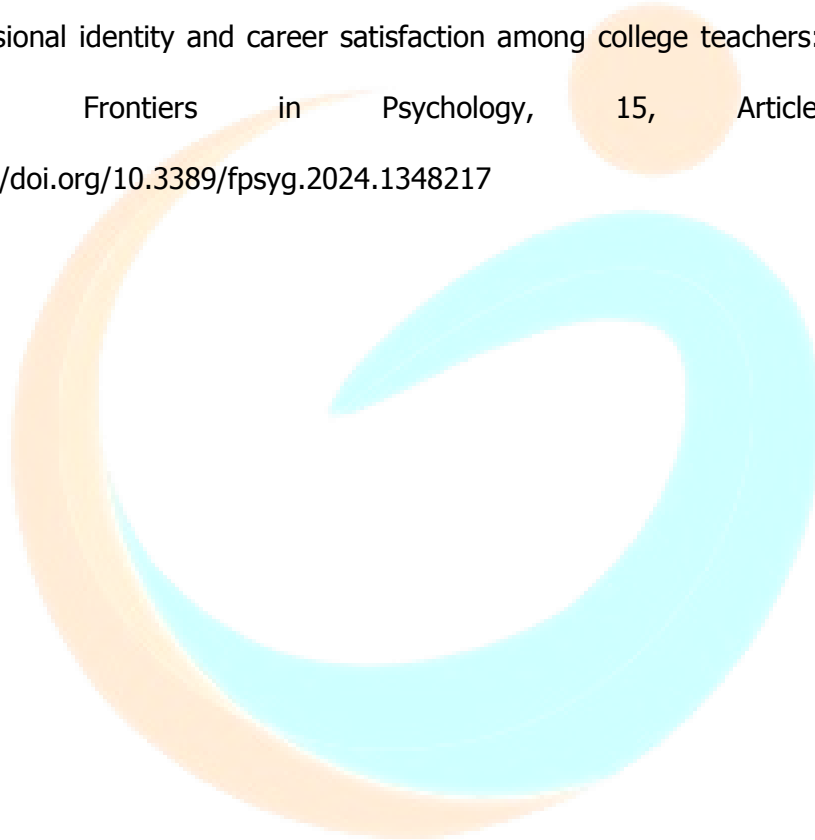
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