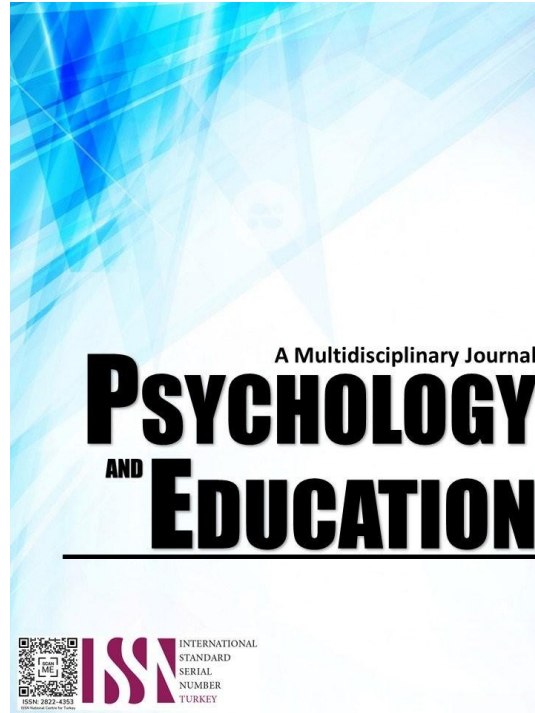


THE WAVES OF EDUCATIONAL PURSUIT: THE UNHEARD VOICES OF TEACHERS TEACHING IN ZARAGOSA ISLAND



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The Waves of Educational Pursuit: The Voices of Teachers in Zaragosa Island

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of teachers teaching in Zaragoza Island. Even though many studies explore rural education, there is little or no specific research about the experiences of teachers in Zaragosa Island especially their sea travel challenges, lack of support systems, and daily struggles they faced. This study used descriptive phenomenology as its research design anchored on the Thematic Analysis of Braun and Clarke. Anchoring the thematic analysis of Braun and Clark, this study explored the experiences of 5 participants following the purposive sampling technique. This study was conducted through online interviews via Facebook Messenger to respect the teachers' uninterrupted vacation time. After analyzing the data, this study created emerging themes to explicitly describe their experiences. The themes were summed to WAVES which stands for Withstanding the Tides, Aches and Adjustment, Voices of Experience, Encounters with Learning and Surmounting the Odds. Waves the WAVES presents a thematic representation of the core struggles and resilience of island teachers, grounded in their real-life experiences. This study aims to give voice to their experiences and highlight the need for targeted support systems and improved working conditions.

Keywords: *Zaragoza Island, Education in the Island, Lived Experiences, Descriptive Phenomenology*

Introduction

Teaching in an island setting comes with unique challenges that shape both the educators' experiences and the quality of education they provide. Research by Ucag et al. (2024) highlights how teachers in remote schools, such as those in Negros Island, struggle with transportation difficulties, limited resources, and poor infrastructure, making their jobs even more demanding. However, while studies have explored the challenges of educators in rural areas, little attention has been given to the everyday struggles of teachers in Zaragosa Island—particularly the long, difficult commutes they endure just to reach their schools. Understanding their experiences is crucial in finding ways to support them, improve their working conditions, and ultimately create better learning environments for students. This study aims to shed light on their realities and contribute to a strategic plan that addresses these challenges, helping island educators continue their vital work with greater ease and support.

Teaching in island communities comes with many challenges that deeply affect both educators and students. From long, risky commutes by boat to schools with limited resources, teachers must overcome numerous obstacles just to provide quality education. On a global scale, Ahmadi (2020) found that 14% of teachers in remote areas struggle with transportation and communication issues, making their jobs even more difficult. In the Philippines, Ucag et al. (2024) highlight those teachers in Negros Island not only face a lack of infrastructure and resources but also experience emotional strain from being away from their families. Locally, in Cebu, teachers face issues such as a lack of school facilities and increased absenteeism among students, which hampers effective teaching and learning. These findings underscore the resilience of educators in overcoming significant obstacles to fulfill their teaching responsibilities.

Teachers battle each bump of waves of determination to fulfill their teaching profession towards their learner. Long, risky commutes, limited resources, and isolation contribute to high teacher turnover. Arcay et al. (2024) highlight that tough working conditions and financial struggles push many educators to leave, while Ucag et al. (2024) emphasize the emotional strain of working in these remote areas. Without proper support, low pay and lack of growth opportunities only add to the problem. To keep teachers in these communities, researchers suggest better salaries, stronger professional development, and improved school facilities. Ensuring these changes is key to creating a stable, well-supported teaching workforce for island learners.

Teaching the lived experiences in Zaragosa Island presents unique challenges and opportunities that differ significantly to those who are in mainland areas. Adding this study to the literature give voice to the teachers who navigate isolation, limited resources and difficulties that impact the personal and professional lives of educators. Recognizing the experiences of teachers matter the most because they highlight the need for stronger support systems and create a better training opportunity to island schools. By addressing these needs, teachers must be provided with enough assistance including classroom materials, water and sanitation, electricity, training programs, and financial incentives for teachers. Despite of these challenges, this assistance can help create a conducive learning environment for teachers in Zaragosa. It should also ensure that teachers are flexible and resourceful in their crafts. Adding this, will implement the effective teaching strategies of teachers in Zaragosa Island. This study aims to recognize the teachers experiences by highlighting their needed support systems, and trainings to Island Schools.

Research Questions

This study uncovered the lived experiences of teachers teaching in the Zaragoza Island, Badian, Cebu South Province. Specifically, this study answered the question:

1. What are the lived experiences of the participants in teaching in the island?

Literature Review

Teachers in coastal schools face numerous challenges, including travel safety risks, limited communication access, inadequate educational resources, and the financial struggles of their students. These difficulties require the need for educators to develop resilience, adaptability, and innovative teaching strategies to ensure effective learning despite these constraints Sente (2022). Below are published articles that discuss the challenges faced by teachers in commuting to and from coastal schools, as well as other challenges they face that immensely impact their professional and personal lives. The articles provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of these educators, offering a deeper understanding of their struggles, coping mechanisms, and the support needed to enhance their teaching conditions. This is beneficial in order to inform policymakers, educational institutions, and stakeholders about the necessary interventions that can help improve the working environment of teachers in coastal areas, in ensuring a more sustainable and effective education system for students' success.

The study entitled "Sailing against the Waves: Challenges and Coping Mechanisms of Teachers Assigned in a Coastal School" by Francisco (2020). This research study centered on surveying the involvement of teachers operating in shore school locations. To bring about this goal, the investigators preferred ten secondary educators in the municipality which is the Sta. Cruz National High School. The researchers employed an approach in research which the phenomenological research approach, put to use survey questions progressed by the fact-finders as the main procedure for data gathering through interviews. Corbet (2000) the discovery made known that the obstacles faced by teachers in coastal schools fundamentally associate to travel safety, communication methods, inadequate educative materials, and the economic status of the students. Aloufi (2022) Regardless of facing these obstacles, educators in coastal schools are supervise by making use of the following strategies: (in terms of travel safety) donning life support gear, overcoming personal fears, utilizing school boat services, be presented with support from school authority, and efficiently managing time; (in terms of communication methods) recognize accessible locations and coordinating with local government units during emergencies; (in terms of lack of learning materials) employing creativity as well as resourcefulness; (in relation to students' financial situations) exhibiting positivity together with passion in their work. Cresencio (2023) states that the Department of Education could carry out a needs assessment in schools to accurately pinpoint additional issues and challenges in coastal school areas.

In accordance with Sanchez (2022), the objective of their research is to unveil the challenges faced by teachers in selected coastal communities in Central Luzon, Philippines, and to address their challenges by designing a solution to enhance the quality of the teaching profession. This study employed a sampling technique to select 15 participants from the elementary and high school levels. By using a semi-structured, open-ended interview guide, guided by the researchers, the individual interviews were conducted. The collected data were scrutinized using descriptive phenomenological analysis. Studies indicate that there are two key themes that depict the personal experiences of Filipino teachers: "A Leap of Faith: An Invitation to Transcend Oneself in the Name of Authentic Public Service" (Sanchez, 2022) a as well as "Living and Loving: An Extraordinary and Joyful Experience in the Name of Authentic Public Service" (Maynard-Moody, 2022). The study determines that, despite the challenges of teaching in coastal villages, these hindrances do not overshadow the teacher's sense of fulfillment and gratitude toward the authorities and bestowing upon them a privilege to serve the learners and the school community. The findings emphasize the need for the government and school stakeholders to strengthen the support system for teachers located in the coastal areas. In addition, they highlight the significance of formulating policies and laws which prioritize teacher's well-being and enhance the education system (Vuong,2024).

According to Heda (2022), investigates the resilient of teachers in a remote Sumba Island area in where teachers stay resilient and how they cope up with stress despite challenges teachers face in the teaching field. The data was being collected through a close-up interview with four teachers who were teaching in Sumba Island. Concluding that with lack of technology understanding, lack of systems and resource tool, diverse insights with fellow workers, and feeling uncomfortable in giving lessons in secluded locality are some of the factors where the teachers carry the student stress in teaching .Despite the burdens they carry, they also lift a strong character and mindset that would help them cope and work for their everyday living; their positivity, persistency, interacting and sharing of ideas with colleagues, self-reflection, and knowing the purpose of their teaching added their motivation and boosting their selves to become a better individuals and to become better educators (Lucas,2023). This is the key for the students to learn and for the teachers to stay resilient that come upon finding the feeling of happiness that keeps them fill their profession as a teacher, Platsidou (2021).

According to Tallara(2024),the goal of their research is to unveil the real life experiences of the teachers who faced struggles and challenges of teaching due to high tides in Hagonoy, Bulacan .This research dives into the real experiences of teachers in coastal areas, where high water levels bring both challenges and opportunities such as the difficulties in upholding education quality, the teaching strategies implemented, the coping strategies utilized, and the advantages of teaching in coastal regions. As a result, challenges can also negatively impact to the students. The study aims to find solutions so that every student has a fair chance to learn even though they struggle with things like limited equipment or poor internet access, Roopa (2021). In order to addressed this problem teachers in coastal areas constantly adjust to ensure continuous learning, Yu (2024). It also recognizes that teaching in these conditions isn't just about lesson plans it's about resilience. Through the help of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Education it ensures that both teachers

and students prepared and ready to conquer the challenges and the realities of their surroundings Arciaga (2022).

According to Lorelie (2021), educators who possess passion and drive, and the ability to reflect on the student's success and triumphs they are the epitome of dedication, support and devotion in their teaching process for guiding and proving students with quality education. Räsänen (2022) states that teachers persist in education despite the constant burnout they face and career turnover transitions, despite these challenges teachers proved their commitment in helping students reach success. The effort to assess teachers' skills and knowledge, particularly in island schools, highlighted their dedication to education. Teachers had the determination to teach students despite these tough times specifically in pandemic- despite not being fully prepared, lacking materials, no definite online source. Thorough understanding of the individual influence of the teachers' skills, and effectiveness provides an understanding on improving valuable insights on teaching strategies and the optimization of student's outcomes, a crucial foundation of this study Munna (2021).

According to Cabiles (2024), the objective of their study is to examine the lived experiences of educators in coastal regions or communities, focusing on the skills and challenges that shape their professional careers. Teachers hold a crucial position in education, despite this, research has been conducted on how their geographic setting affects their experiences. To gather data, participant observation and comprehensive interviews were utilized with teachers as respondents. Husserl and Heidegger's phenomenological frameworks were applied to grasp the unique experiences of each participant. The findings indicate that educators possess several essential qualities, including professional competence, teaching skills, social abilities, effective communication, and adaptability (Larsen, 2021). Due to fewer distractions that encourage unnecessary expenditures, financial literacy was identified as a strength among teachers in remote and coastal areas. It was found that teachers in urban settings were more susceptible to excessive spending due to the influence of nearby commercial establishments and recreational centers. These findings emphasize the importance of understanding how educators' experiences and capabilities are shaped by their geographical location, providing valuable insights that can inform educational policies and practices.

This literature review explored the lived experiences of teachers in coastal schools facing immense challenges—travel safety concerns, limited communication access, inadequate educational resources, and students' financial Sanchez (2022). Despite these hardships, they remain dedicated to their students, finding creative ways to teach and staying motivated by their passion for education. Drawing from these insights, their resilience and commitment show the true power of education as a source of hope and change Mullen (2025). Furthermore, studies highlighted the need for stronger government support, improved policies, and enhanced resources to ensure a sustainable and effective teaching environment in these areas Frahm (2021). This literature review highlights the importance of empowering educators and learners for reaching their full potential, equipping them a necessary support and through creating a supporting learning environment we lay the foundation for long term success.

Methodology

This study used the descriptive phenomenology anchoring the six phases of Thematic Analysis of Braun and Clarke. This design is appropriate to be utilized as this gives a clear picture on describing the lived experiences of the teachers teaching in Zaragosa Island. Indicated in the analysis is the six-phase process which are the (1) Familiarization wherein the researchers are immersed with the data to gain deeper understanding of the nature of phenomenon, (2) Generating Initial Codes that determines the features of the qualitative data which establishes impact and connections to the research questions raised in the study, (3) Searching for Themes that collect and collate codes to become themes that describe the lived experiences of the participants, (4) Reviewing Themes to refine and identify the detailed information of the themes ensuring the rigor of the study and how accurately it represents the data provided by the participants, (5) Defining and Naming Themes that give a detailed analysis of each theme and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures, and lastly, (6) Producing the Report that finalizes the analysis and information to describe the lived experiences of the participants teaching in the Zaragosa Island. The research environment was set in the specific island in Badian which is the Zaragosa Island. There were 12 teachers who qualified for interview as part of the purposive sampling, however, after the 5th participant, the data was already saturated. The participants were interviewed and provided assurance of the confidentiality of their identity and their data was set to the highest degree of privacy. They were not harmed, and they can leave whenever they are not comfortable during the interview. The ethical standards were strictly followed during the data gathering. The narrative accounts from the participants were analyzed and interpreted using the Thematic Analysis which created the six themes, namely Withstanding the Tides, Aches and Adjustments, Voices of Experience, Encounters with Learning, and Surmounting the Odds. These emerging themes are discussed comprehensively with literature and related studies to corroborate the experiences of the participants towards the phenomenon established in this study.

Results and Discussion

THE EXPERIENCES OF NELWY HIRED TEACHERS IN THE HINTERLAND SCHOOLS

Themes	Subthemes	Narrative Accounts
Withstanding the Tides	Refreshing Island Commute	Travelling every day from mainland the to the island of Zaragosa is interesting and fun Even though I have my boat, traveling to Zaragosa daily is still challenging especially during low tide. While riding a pump boat I can see the different

Aches and Adjustments	Unpredictable Travel	<p>beautiful creatures under the sea and it always amazes me. I also enjoy watching the beautiful beach resort around, the beautiful mountains, and the beautiful surroundings of the island. Traveling every day is tiring but it also enables me to refresh my energy from a very tiring day after work. I am truly grateful that I am assigned to Zaragoza. (P2)</p> <p>My daily travel to Zaragoza is unpredictable. I have experienced walking long distances due to low tide. There were days when I had to carry my teaching materials while walking on slippery rocks and through shallow waters. It's physically demanding, but I also find beauty in the surroundings. It helps lighten the mood despite the tiring journey ahead. One time, it started to rain halfway through my walk, and I had no umbrella with me. I ended up using a plastic folder to cover my head and teaching guides. When I arrived at school, my clothes were soaked, but I was just thankful the materials stayed dry. Moments like that test your patience, but they also remind you of how much you care about being present for your students.(P4)</p>
	Commitment Amid Risks	<p>Even though I have my boat, traveling to Zaragoza daily is still challenging especially during low tide. Sometimes, the water becomes too shallow and I have to walk a long distance just to reach deeper parts where the boat can float. It's physically tiring and time-consuming. There are also times when the waves are strong or the weather is unpredictable, which makes the trip risky. But despite all that, I still push through because I love teaching and I want to be there for my students. (P1)</p>
	Complicated Commute	<p>Akong experiences? Since gapuyo man ta (ko) sa mainland, dili kaayo siya ingon nga bukid. So ang experience nako during is mag travel pako padulong sa lungsod (poblacion) dayon baklay ko padulong sa Sima, naa man didto ang mga pambot sakyan nimo padulong sa island. Kung hunasan, adto ko sa Manay-as sakay. Dili man siya ingon nga maglakaw mi pero naa ra gihapon mi sa pambot sakay, ang boatman ray nakahebaw sa dalan mga again jud so kung ing ana nga times, mga 30-40 minutes siguro kay maghinay2 raman mi. Pero if taob, adto ko sakay sa sima, so mga 10-20 minutes ra siya padung sa isla.</p> <p><i>I have many experiences. Since I lived on the mainland the first thing, I did was to travel to Población, then to Sima where boats are there to transfer passengers to Zaragoza Island. If it's low tide, we would transfer to Manay-as, well it's not like we are going to cross barefoot where only the boatman knows the exact path because of the complex route we cannot cross the island thoroughly so it roughly takes 30-40 minutes. And if it's high tide in Sima then it'll take approximately 10-20 minutes most of the time. (P3)</i></p>
	Purposeful Sacrifice	<p>I need to take multiple routes before reaching the boat terminal. I usually leave very early to avoid delays, but bad weather often surprises us. However, even with the tough conditions, there's a sense of calmness when I see the island from afar. It reminds me why I do this every day to serve and educate the children in Zaragoza. (P5)</p>
	Before-During-After Class Barriers	<p>Before class, one of my biggest challenge is making sure I can cross safely and on time due to different weather conditions and there are low and high tides to be taken into account as well. During class, I'm sometimes already tired from the trip, but I try not to let it affect how I teach. Aside from this there are also challenges faced by educators like us such as limited school resources , sudden power interruptions, or lack of signal, which can affect learning and teaching process. (P1)</p>
	Multi-Phase Challenge	<p>Kada adlaw nakong buhaton jud is before ko muadtog skwelahan, dili ko magsuot daan ug uniform para dili ko mabasa ug mag ulan ba ron or mapiskan sa balod. Unya na nako suoton ang uniform nako ig abot na nakos skwelahan. Pero ug mag base ko sa before sa klase, ang room gubot jud siya, dili</p>

	<p>siya limpyohan sa mga studyante, pasagdahan ra. So instead nga magklase ko ig abot nako, makuhaan nuon sa oras sa pagpalimpyo ug pagpangasaba. Pero dili man hinuon siya taga adlaw, naa ray times. During sa klase nako, ang ako ma encounter jud is naa gyuy di maminaw nga mga studyante, naay uban mag cutting classes, naa pajuy bulyagon. Ig human sa klase, muuli napod sa mainland, ting uliay naman naa gyuy ubang mga maestra pod nga ganahan motravel basta high tide kay dali raman maabot pero if ma timingan nga hunasan, mas dugay2 jud siya mauli. So timing2 rajud siya ba. Mao na akoang mga nasinati.</p> <p><i>My daily challenge after class is traveling back to the main land because there are many considerations to be made . We don't usually wear our uniforms during the trip to avoid getting wet and we wear them once we arrive at school. Before classes, the challenge is that the rooms are sometimes messy because some students neglect their responsibility to keep them clean. Instead of starting class on time, I end up scolding them. It's not every day, but it happens. During my class, there are many challenges, like students not listening, cutting classes, or being disruptive in the class , things that is hard to control. And then after class, the sea level becomes an issue when going home. Some teachers prefer to go home during high tide because it's more convenient and they arrive on time. But if it's low tide, the travel time becomes much longer.(P3)</i></p>
Travel-Linked Stress	<p>I once had to delay a class because our boat engine broke down halfway through the trip towards the Zaragoza Island. During class, I sometimes feel distracted worrying about the tide level for my return trip , wondering if I could go home or just stay in school sometimes this kind of thoughts is mentally draining. After class, the fear of getting stranded on the island due to bad weather becomes very real, especially during the rainy season.(P4)</p>
Disruptions and Delays	<p>Some days, I deal with messy rooms and unprepared students. Sometimes I end up starting late because I have to set up everything by myself. During class, power interruptions and noise from outside the classroom affect my teaching. And after class, it's always a rush to catch the boat specially if you don't have a direct contact with boat drivers. There were moments when I had to wade through knee-deep water just to make it to the terminal before sunset. It maybe is exhausting, but somehow, we are able to manage. (P5)</p>
Severe Weather Risks	<p>The challenges I encounter before class includes low tide, bad weather, and when the pump boat has trouble starting, which can make me late for work. During class, I've experienced my uniform getting wet due to strong waves, and my bag zipper being destroyed because of the salty water. After class, I've traveled across the sea during strong winds and rain. One time, there was a thunderstorm and lightning so sharp that I couldn't see anything around me due to the heavy rain and in where only the light from afar can be seen. And I consider as the most dangerous and traumatic experience I've ever had so far. But thankfully, we landed safely on the mainland and is able to get home. (P2)</p>
Sacrificial Dedication	<p>What really stands out to me is how this experience has taught me patience, perseverance, and compassion. I've realized that teaching in an island setting requires not just knowledge, but also heart and grit. Every time I saw my students excited to learn; I feel that all the sacrifices are worth it. It's also fulfilling to be part of their growth despite the many limitations we all face. This journey made me a more resourceful and dedicated teacher. (P1)</p>
Voices of Experience	<p>What makes this journey meaningful for me is learning how to flow with whatever life's challenges throws at you. Every time I travel through the sea, I think about how far I've come, not</p>
Gratitude Through Adversity	

Encounters with Learning	Teacher-Student Bonds	<p>just in distance but in my personal growth as well. Being assigned here taught me how to embrace simplicity, value relationships, value life and be grateful even for the smallest victories inside the classroom and the institution. (P5)</p> <p>Meaningful experiences? Kuan siguro, part is ang collaboration namo sa ubang teachers. Mao na akong best practices. Kung sa klase nako, kuan, ang mga bata kay mo participate jud sila pero nay uban di, pero ganahan ko mo participate sila sa ilang will ba. Sa una pakong nagtudlo, pandemic man to nga time-a, siyempre first time pa nako, ganahan ko makakita sa mga faces sa mga studyante. Pag human sa pandemic mga 2022 to, naay studyante nga muundang, wa siyay sulod2 sa klase so as a teacher nag homevisit ko, times nga ing-ana nalibot na nakong tibuok Zaragosa. So ing ana feel nako fulfilling siya ba nga makatabang sa studyante. Ang mga bata gud, friendly siya, approachable ug kanang masultian sa problema. Kuan man pod sila gud, mo set sila ug boundaries ba, mao pod ako naganahan. So mao na akong mga meaningful experiences”</p> <p><i>Part of my meaningful learning experiences is the collaboration with my co-teachers. During my class, my students are participative—though not all, but I really like and want them to participate with their will. During my first teaching, I really felt the excitement, the joy to teach students. When the pandemic ended in 2022, one of my students wanted to quit school—absences, no communication. What I did was a home-visit. During those instances, I was able to travel all parts of the island. With my experiences I can feel that it was really fulfilling to help students. They are friendly, approachable and a listener to my problems (not personal). They set boundaries which I really consider much. So that was my meaningful experiences.(P3)</i></p>
	Purpose Through Limitations	<p>My meaningful experience, is discovering a deeper sense of patience and purpose in life. Teaching in an island school made me realize so many things about how resourceful I can be when materials are limited and doing my best in order to supplement what is lacking. Seeing my students strive despite their hardships reminds me why this job is worth it. They inspire me just as much as I hope to inspire them in their life. (P4)</p>
	Emotional Growth	<p>The meaningful learning experience is to adapt every challenge and difficulties of life may bring. In our life let us embrace the calmness of the waves and let us dance with the big waves during bad weather. I am grateful these innumerable experiences while travelling from mainland to the island of Zaragoza and vice versa. (P2)</p>
	Resilience and Reflection	<p>Teaching in Zaragoza Island has been physically and mentally demanding, yet it has shaped me into someone more patient and emotionally strong. I’ve learned how to stay calm under pressure, and how to keep teaching even when I’m worried about the tide or the weather. It’s not always easy, but worth it.(P4)</p>
	Living the Lesson	<p>I’ve come to see this journey like the sea which is calm some days, wild on others. But always full of wonder. Every trip to Zaragoza gives me time to reflect, to breathe, to be grateful. I’ve learned not to fight the waves, but to ride with them. Even on the hardest days, I remind myself of the joy this job brings, the smiles, the laughter, the life lessons. The challenges are real, but so is the beauty. I’m not just a teacher; I’m someone who learns from the sea, the skies, and the stories I live each day.. (P2)</p>
	Shared Learning	<p>Ang pinakastick gyud nako kay dili lang ang mga leksyon nga akong gitudlo, kundi katong mga butang nga akong natun-an pud gikan sa akong mga kauban nga magtutudlo, sa mga estudyante, ug bisan kadtong mga lakaw-lakaw sa baybay. Nakasabot ko nga ang pagtudlo, dili lang diay para sa usa lang ka tawo. Usa ni ka paningkamot nga nagtinabangay mi tanan.</p>

Surmounting the Odds	Consistency as Strength	<p>Nakat-on ko nga musalig sa uban ug mahimong kasaligan pud sa uban. Usahay, ang pinakanindot nga mga kasinatian dili ra diay makita sa sulod sa classroom naa pud sa mga home visit, istorya-istorya, o sa hilom nga byahe buntag sayo. Mao gyud na'y nakapabug-at ug bili sa among panaw."</p> <p><i>What sticks with me the most aren't just the lessons I teach, but the ones I've learned which are from my co-teachers, from my students, even from the long walks across the shoreline. I've discovered that teaching isn't something we do alone. It's a shared experience. I've learned to lean on others and to be someone others can lean on too. I've learned that some of the most meaningful moments happen outside the classroom — on home visits, during conversations, or in the quiet of early morning travel. That's what makes this journey worth it.</i> (P3)</p> <p>Teaching here has taught me a different kind of strength which is the kind you don't always notice at first. There are days I'm tired before I even reach the classroom, and yet, once I see my students, something shifts. I've learned that consistency, even in the face of unpredictable weather or low tide, is powerful. I've also learned to be resourceful, to make do with what's available and that's power, the power to push through even when things are tough. I'm not just teaching lessons; I'm living one every day.(P1)</p> <p>Every time I step onto that boat, I remind myself why I'm doing this. It's not easy such as waking up early, racing against the tide, arriving soaked or exhausted. This place, this job, has taught me a lot of things such as resilience, patience, and above all, purpose. I've learned to adapt, to stay calm, to laugh at the little things. I may be tired some days, but I never feel empty because this work fills me with meaning it gives me the drive to move forward. And that's something I'll always carry with me. (P5)</p>
	Support Systems Needed	<p>Even for those of us who have our own boats, additional support is still essential. There is a need for improved docking areas or safer pathways to make crossing easier, especially during low tide. Providing subsidized transportation or school-owned boats with reliable schedules would help ensure safer and more consistent travel. Teachers who use personal boats would also benefit from fuel allowances or support for boat maintenance. The construction of temporary teacher quarters or resting areas on the island would be helpful, especially during emergencies, bad weather, or after late school events. It would also be beneficial to coordinate more effectively with LGUs and DepEd to create schedules and systems that consider the unique travel challenges we face, possibly through flexible work arrangements. Lastly, implementing mental health and wellness programs for island-based teachers is crucial, as we constantly deal with both physical and emotional stress, and sustaining our well-being directly impacts our ability to continue serving our students. (P1)</p>
	Safety and Security	<p>For me, the first and most important thing is to ensure our safety not just our physical safety, but also the security of the things we carry every day like our cellphones, laptops, and important school documents. These are not just tools for work, but also lifelines when we are far from home and dealing with unpredictable weather or sea conditions. (P2)</p>
	Finding Fulfillment in Transit	<p>Sa kadugayan, na enjoy man nako ang pag travel² sa island back and forth bisag kahibalo ko naa juy times nga hasol siya. Dili man ko ingon sa akua nga part pero sa mga teachers nga lagyo ba. If lagyo ila, didto na lang sila mamuyo ba ron sa duol² lang ug convenient gani ang pag travel. Saona makahinumdom ko, makisabay ko sa ubang teachers nga mura ganig pakyaw ilang transpo gani, naa poy times nga duka kaayo ko ato nga</p>

	<p>hagit nako alas 7 nakasakay. Usually baya early kaayo manglakaw ang ubang mga maestra.</p> <p><i>Teaching on the island has been both challenging and rewarding. While traveling daily can be a hassle, I've learned to find joy in the journey, especially because I get to witness breathtaking sunrises and sunsets. Some teachers suggest living on the island to avoid the daily commute, and I agree it would make things easier, but I've grown to appreciate the travel itself. I remember when someone used to pick us up at the shore and three teachers shared one boat, but after an accident, the system changed for safety reasons. These days, I sometimes find myself running late and getting to the terminal around 7 a.m., thanks to my sleepyhead tendencies, but overall, I've come to embrace the experience and the unique beauty that comes with it. (P3)</i></p>
Emergency Preparedness	<p>I suggest setting up a reliable communication system that can work even in remote areas , like emergency radios so teachers can easily call for help during bad weather or unexpected delays as well as offering training workshops on safety and first aid specific to island travel would also empower us to handle emergencies better and avoid trauma. (P4)</p>
Flexible and Healthy Living	<p>I think having a flexible schedule that accounts for unpredictable weather and travel delays would greatly ease the pressure on our lives as well as improving access to healthcare services on the island for the teachers and their families to have a much more secure and comfortable environment to live in. (P5)</p>

Theme 1: Withstanding the Tides

The first theme, Withstanding the Tides, captures the journey of educators who navigate daily challenges such as crossing across waters and waves to reach the Island of Zaragosa and fulfill their responsibilities. This theme highlights the relevant time, physical effort, and dedication of the teachers which enables them to overcome the natural challenges posed by the tides and weather conditions. It underscores the resilience and commitment of teachers who navigate these obstacles daily to fulfill their educational responsibilities and commitment to their vows as a teacher. The insights provided by the participants further reinforce this theme, as illustrated in their shared experiences below.

Participant 2 said, “Travelling every day from mainland the to the island of Zaragosa is interesting and fun Even though I have my boat, traveling to Zaragosa daily is still challenging especially during low tide. While riding a pump boat I can see the different beautiful creatures under the sea and it always amazes me. I also enjoy watching the beautiful beach resort around, the beautiful mountains, and the beautiful surroundings of the island. Traveling every day is tiring but it also enables me to refresh my energy from a very tiring day after work. I am truly grateful that I am assigned to Zaragosa. ”

Participant 2 offers a notably optimistic and reflective perspective on their daily commute from the mainland to Zaragosa Island. As far as being a tedious routine, the journey by traveling the pump boat turns into a daily routine of calm and inspiration. The participant describes the rides as fun and interesting, captivated by the crystal-clear sea waters that tell how colorful the underwater world is. Along the way, they can also observe the beauty of lush mountains and verdant island landscapes which all generally foster a sense of awe and appreciation. After a long day of work, instead of feeling exhausted, they find themselves gently refreshed by relaxing on the boat and sightseeing the natural beauty that could bring them into a meaningful day. It’s not just a boring trip because it becomes a valuable moment for them to have a chance to clear their minds, process emotions, and reconnect with themselves (Magno, 2024). This reminds us how a simple shift is more than just a trip; it can turn an ordinary moment into something deeply meaningful. The participant simply says, “I am truly grateful that I am assigned to Zaragosa.” That gratitude is not just a simple journey but a journey that they used and turned into a wellspring of daily life

Participant 4 shared, “My daily travel to Zaragoza is unpredictable. I have experienced walking long distances due to low tide. There were days when I had to carry my teaching materials while walking on slippery rocks and through shallow waters. It’s physically demanding, but I also find beauty in the surroundings. It helps lighten the mood despite the tiring journey ahead. One time, it started to rain halfway through my walk, and I had no umbrella with me. I ended up using a plastic folder to cover my head and teaching guides. When I arrived at school, my clothes were soaked, but I was just thankful the materials stayed dry. Moments like that test your patience, but they also remind you of how much you care about being present for your students.”

The experience shared by Participant 4 implies the resilience and dedication required of teachers assigned to geographically isolated areas. Their experience in navigating difficult terrain enduring unpredictable weather and relying on improvised means such as using a plastic folder to protect essential teaching materials, is a testament to their commitment that goes beyond their professional duty.

These everyday challenges, quietly endured by educators assigned in geographically isolated areas, reflect a deep sense of responsibility, commitment and a desire to remain present for their students despite the limited resources and challenges they need to face where such experiences remind us that resilience in education is often sustained not by systems, but by individual will and meaningful connection to one's purpose and commitment (Valencia & Agonoy, 2024).

According to Participant 1, "Even though I have my boat, traveling to Zaragosa daily is still challenging especially during low tide. Sometimes, the water becomes too shallow and I have to walk a long distance just to reach deeper parts where the boat can float. It's physically tiring and time-consuming. There are also times when the waves are strong or the weather is unpredictable, which makes the trip risky. But despite all that, I still push through because I love teaching and I want to be there for my students."

As stated by Participant 1, the main challenge is to ensure a safe and timely crossing, in which tides and different weather conditions should be considered. Fatigue from the trip is often felt, and there are additional difficulties such as limited school resources, power interruptions, and poor signal, all of which affect learning, though efforts are made to not let these impact teaching sometimes it is not enough (Laurente & Asis-Gilbas, 2022). Traveling home can also be stressful to educators, especially during low tide or bad weather, which often results in late and exhausting arrivals at home.

Participant 3 stated, "Akong experiences? Since gapuyo man ta (ko) sa mainland, dili kaayo siya ingon nga bukid. So ang experience nako during is mag travel pako padulong sa lungsod (poblacion) dayon baklay ko padulong sa Sima, naa man didto ang mga pambot sakyan nimo padulong sa island. Kung hunasan, adto ko sa Manay-as sakay. Dili man siya ingon nga maglakaw mi pero naa ra gihapon mi sa pambot sakay, ang boatman ray nakahebaw sa dalan mga agian jud so kung ing ana nga times, mga 30-40 minutes siguro kay maghinay2 raman mi. Pero if taob, adto ko sakay sa sima, so mga 10-20 minutes ra siya padung sa isla.

(I have many experiences. Since I lived on the mainland the first thing, I did was to travel to Población, then to Sima where boats are there to transfer passengers to Zaragosa Island. If it's low tide, we would transfer to Manay-as, well it's not like we are going to cross barefoot where only the boatman knows the exact path because of the complex route we cannot cross the island thoroughly so it roughly takes 30-40 minutes. And if it's high tide in Sima then it'll take approximately 10-20 minutes most of the time.)

Participant 3 shared the challenges of traveling from the mainland to Zaragosa Island. Depending on the tide, the route and travel time change—about 10–20 minutes during high tide from Sima, and 30–40 minutes during low tide through Manay-as. They rely on boatmen who know the safe paths, showing how natural conditions and local knowledge affect their daily travel. This highlights the effort and adaptability needed by teachers in remote island areas.

Participant 5 said "I need to take multiple routes before reaching the boat terminal. I usually leave very early to avoid delays, but bad weather often surprises us. However, even with the tough conditions, there's a sense of calmness when I see the island from afar. It reminds me why I do this every day to serve and educate the children in Zaragosa."

Participant 5 talks about how traveling to Zaragoza Island isn't easy. The paths and unexpected weather storms make them stronger. Yet, despite all that, they remain calm and fully focused on one goal: supporting the island's students and helping them to thrive hard in school. What stands out is the quiet dedication behind their words. They aren't just traveling but they are choosing to show up even though how tough it is, the weather and all, because they care deeply about their student's success (Diago & Parcutilo, 2023). It takes a kind of inner strength and unshakable purpose to keep going no matter what happens. Their story is a powerful reminder that real commitment isn't always loud and flashy. Often, it's those measured everyday choices, choosing to teach despite the odds and that is the biggest difference.

The first theme, Withstanding the Tides, explores the daily realities of teachers commuting to Zaragosa Island which is an experience marked by physical exhaustion, unpredictable weather, and complex travel routes. Participants recalled walking long distances during low tide, carrying heavy teaching materials across slippery rocks and shallow waters, and adapting to changing sea conditions. Yet alongside these challenges, many also spoke of moments that uplift them such as the peaceful view of the island from afar, the beauty of the sunrise, and the calming presence of the sea which at the same time heals their fatigue. These experiences, while difficult, are met with resilience and a strong sense of purpose. The journey itself becomes a meaningful part of their teaching life, which reminds them each day of their commitment to educate and make a great impact in the lives of the children on Zaragoza Island.

Theme 2: Aches and Adjustments

The second theme, Aches and Adjustments, highlights the multifaceted challenges encountered by educators in remote island schools. This includes, physical fatigue, limited classroom resources that teachers faced in where they must contend with daily. It reflects the continuous need for adaptability and perseverance as educators to navigate both the demanding travel conditions as well as the constraints within the teaching environment as well as the personal struggles. The participants' accounts provide valuable insights that underscore the perseverance and adaptability in facing different challenges required to maintain educational quality despite these obstacles and challenges they have to face.

Participant 1 shared, "Before class, one of my biggest challenges is making sure I can cross safely and on time due to different weather conditions and there are low and high tides to be taken into account as well. During class, I'm sometimes already tired from the trip, but I try not to let it affect how I teach (Magno, 2024). Aside from this there are also challenges faced by educators like us such as

limited school resources, sudden power interruptions, or lack of signal, which can affect learning and teaching process.”

As stated by Participant 1, the main challenge is ensuring a safe and timely crossing, considering the unpredictable tide and weather conditions. These natural factors greatly affect the daily commute of island teachers, making travel to and from the island physically and mentally draining. Fatigue from the trip is often experienced, and additional difficulties such as limited school resources, power interruptions, and poor signal affect learning. However, efforts are made not to let these impact teaching. Traveling home can also be stressful, particularly during low tide or bad weather conditions, which often result in late and exhausting arrivals.

Participant 3 said, “Kada adlaw nakong buhaton jud is before ko muadtog skwelahan, dili ko magsuot daan ug uniform para dili ko mabasa ug mag ulan ba ron or mapiskan sa balod. Unya na nako suoton ang uniform nako ig abot na nakos skwelahan. Pero ug mag base ko sa before sa klase, ang room gubot jud siya, dili siya limpyohan sa mga studyante, pasagdahan ra. So instead nga magklase ko ig abot nako, makuhaan nuon sa oras sa pagpalimpyo ug pagpangasaba. Pero dili man hinuon siya taga adlaw, naa ray times. During sa klase nako, ang ako ma encounter jud is naa gyuy di maminaw nga mga studyante, naay uban mag cutting classes, naa pajuy bulyagon. Ig human sa klase, muuli napod sa mainland, ting uliyay naman naa gyuy ubang mga maestra pod nga ganahan motravel basta high tide kay dali raman maabot pero if ma timingan nga hunasan, mas dugay2 jud siya mauli. So timing2 rajud siya ba. Mao na akoang mga nasinati”

(My daily challenge after class is traveling back to the main land because there are many considerations to be made . We don't usually wear our uniforms during the trip to avoid getting wet and we wear them once we arrive at school. Before classes, the challenge is that the rooms are sometimes messy because some students neglect their responsibility to keep them clean. Instead of starting class on time, I end up scolding them. It's not every day, but it happens. During my class, there are many challenges, like students not listening, cutting classes, or being disruptive in the class , things that is hard to control. And then after class, the sea level becomes an issue when going home. Some teachers prefer to go home during high tide because it's more convenient and they arrive on time. But if it's low tide, the travel time becomes much longer.)

Participant 3 highlighted the importance of working with other educators as they reflected on various significant events they had experienced in their teaching careers. One of their best practices is this collegial engagement, which promotes professional development and a shared purpose (Pancho, 2023). Participant 3 noted that while not all students actively participate in class, many do. Nonetheless, they expressed a deep appreciation for student participation, particularly from the children's free will rather than pressure. They emphasized that a more genuine and engaging learning environment is created by this voluntary involvement. During the peak of the COVID-19 epidemic, when Participant 3 started teaching, there was a lot of uncertainty and little in-person connection. Even though they were new teachers, they were excited and yearned to interact with students in person. Participant 3 experienced a specific circumstance that had a long-lasting effect when in-person instruction resumed in 2022. Frequent absences and a total communication breakdown were signs that one of their children had begun to withdraw from school. The teacher visited the student's house rather than just recording the absence. They decided to help struggling or disengaged children by traveling across Zaragoza. These visits became a powerful reminder of teachers' duties outside of the classroom. Being able to help students in such direct and intimate ways was one of the most fulfilling parts of the job for Participant 3. After considering it, they discovered that their students were generally kind, personable, and eager to discuss their challenges. In the process, students showed consideration for others' personal space and exhibited qualities that the instructor valued and thought were essential to building long-lasting, polite relationships.

Participant 4 stated , “I once had to delay a class because our boat engine broke down halfway through the trip towards the Zaragoza Island. During class, I sometimes feel distracted worrying about the tide level for my return trip , wondering if I could go home or just stay in school sometimes this kind of thoughts is mentally draining. After class, the fear of getting stranded on the island due to bad weather becomes very real, especially during the rainy season.”

Participant 4 described an especially challenging experience that brought to light the psychological and practical difficulties of getting to and from class at a far-flung, island-based location. One time, a mechanical issue caused the boat engine to fail halfway through the trip, forcing them to postpone a planned class. Despite being unique, this episode serves as an example of a larger and ongoing issue. Participant 4 acknowledged that they had trouble focusing even on class since their mind is constantly focused on the tide and how it can impact the return trip. Being constantly preoccupied with external circumstances beyond one's control is mentally exhausting. Furthermore, relief does not always follow the end of class. Instead, a new wave of fear is triggered by the very real possibility of getting stuck on the island due to sudden weather changes, particularly during the rainy season (Alontaga, 2021). An already difficult educational path is made more complex by the combined strains of mechanical uncertainty, tidal oscillations, and unpredictable weather patterns, which make the process more challenging and test the teacher's perseverance.

Participant 5 said, “Some days, I deal with messy rooms and unprepared students. Sometimes I end up starting late because I have to set up everything by myself. During class, power interruptions and noise from outside the classroom affect my teaching. And after class, it's always a rush to catch the boat specially if you don't have a direct contact with boat drivers. There were moments when I had to wade through knee-deep water just to make it to the terminal before sunset. It maybe is exhausting, but somehow, we are able to manage.”

According to Participant 5, a typical day is characterized by several environmental and logistical difficulties that have a significant

influence on the teaching process in an island-based environment. The pressure of overseeing chaotic classrooms and unprepared kids frequently starts the day. They frequently find themselves in charge of thoroughly preparing the classroom, which causes classes to start later than planned and adds to the stress before instruction starts. Unexpected interruptions still present challenges during class time (Tabilin, 2020). Lessons are disrupted by frequent power outages, and the learning environment is further jeopardized by outside noise, frequently from uncontrollable sources. These difficulties call for patience and ongoing adjustment. These challenges do not go away at the end of the school day. Due to the lack of direct communication with boat operators, Participant 5 underlined the need to be at the boat terminal on time. Teachers are frequently forced to rush against the setting sun because of this uncertainty, sometimes even wading into knee-deep water to reach a leaving boat. These everyday events significantly negatively impact one's physical and mental health. However, Participant 5 saw a resolute attitude despite the fatigue: "Somehow, we manage." This statement captures the fortitude needed to endure under such trying circumstances.

Participant 2 stated, "The challenges I encounter before class includes low tide, bad weather, and when the pump boat has trouble starting, which can make me late for work. During class, I've experienced my uniform getting wet due to strong waves, and my bag zipper being destroyed because of the salty water. After class, I've traveled across the sea during strong winds and rain. One time, there was a thunderstorm and lightning so sharp that I couldn't see anything around me due to the heavy rain and in where only the light from afar can be seen. And I consider as the most dangerous and traumatic experience I've ever had so far. But thankfully, we landed safely on the mainland and is able to get home."

Participant 2 mentioned their daily struggle to fulfill their role as a teacher. The day starts with a sense of uncertainty, where sometimes the sea level is too low, the weather conditions are bad, or the pump boat fails to start, making it difficult or a reason for the delay in getting to school on time. They often arrive soaked from sea spray, with a wet uniform and belongings damaged by saltwater, which causes them physical discomfort and emotional strain. In this way, it doesn't just give them a sense of discomfort but also affects their readiness to teach, making it burdensome to stand firmly in class, feeling unprepared and weary before the day starts (Dela Curz & Santos, 2022). Despite these challenges, their dedication and resilience in teaching remain dominant. One of the most terrible experiences of their story was a frightening boat ride home during a storm, where strong winds and lightning made navigation nearly impossible. This unforgettable experience emphasized the risks they face, not just in their profession, but also in ensuring their safety during their daily commute.

The second theme, Aches and Adjustments, highlights the multifaceted challenges faced by educators teaching in the island community of Zaragoza. Teachers confront significant difficulties, including unpredictable tides, adverse weather, and unreliable transportation, which often result in fatigue even before classes begin shaping their lives for better or for worse. Classroom conditions as well add further complexity, with limited resources, frequent power interruptions, noisy environments, and issues with student behavior and preparedness frequently disrupting the learning process. Despite these physical and mental strains, the participants demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability, managing delays, safety concerns, and the pressures of commuting across challenging waters. Their narratives reveal not only the practical hardships they need to endure but also the emotional toll of constant uncertainty and worry, especially during adverse weather and low tide conditions. Ultimately, these experiences underscore the perseverance and dedication required to sustain educational quality and fulfill their commitment to their students amid ongoing obstacles.

Theme 3: Voices of Experience

The third theme, the Voices of Experience, presents the personal narratives and reflections of educators in remote island schools. This theme highlights their insightful accounts, emotional journeys, and the spectrum of challenges and successes they encounter all throughout their journey in fulfilling academic success despite the things that challenge them. Through these lived experiences, the teachers provide a deeper understanding of the unique realities of teaching in a remote setting, exposing the determination needed and the lasting impact of their devoted service and commitment to their passion.

Participant 1 mentioned, "What really stands out to me is how this experience has taught me patience, perseverance, and compassion. I've realized that teaching in an island setting requires not just knowledge, but also heart and grit. Every time I saw my students excited to learn; I feel that all the sacrifices are worth it. It's also fulfilling to be part of their growth despite the many limitations we all face. This journey made me a more resourceful and dedicated teacher."

Participant 1 highlights teaching as a powerful experience for personal growth. Teaching is not just imparting knowledge, but also having passion, dedication, and commitment. Seeing the students eager to learn is worth fulfilling even on the toughest days. Teaching considers the students' different learning styles and caters to each of their potential, which is essential to their growth (Bacalso & Estrella, 2023). Additionally, teachers should prepare to become resourceful and adaptable to work with students. This would help them become an effective teacher to the students

Participant 5 stated, "What makes this journey meaningful for me is learning how to flow with whatever life's challenges throws at you. Every time I travel through the sea, I think about how far I've come, not just in distance but in my personal growth as well. Being assigned here taught me how to embrace simplicity, value relationships, value life and be grateful even for the smallest victories inside the classroom and the institution."

Participant 5 expressed their meaningful journey, which taught them to become flexible and resilient when facing obstacles. For Participant 5, traveling through the sea up to school symbolizes personal growth, not just the distance traveled, but emotional and professional growth. This highlights that teaching is a meaningful, positive environment with no meaningful obstacles one faces (Gonzales, 2021). They value relationships, cherish life, and are content with the smallest achievements in the classroom and the wider communities. For them, teaching is imparting knowledge to students and at the same time fostering connections with other people. In turn, it would be essential for them to become passionate and be inspired towards their teaching journey statement captures the fortitude needed to endure under such trying circumstances.

Participant 3 expressed, “Meaningful experiences? kuan siguro, part is ang collaboration namo sa ubang teachers. Mao na akong best practices. Kung sa klase nako, kuan, ang mga bata kay mo participate jud sila pero nay uban di, pero ganahan ko mo participate sila sa ilang will ba. Sa una pakong nagtudlo, pandemic man to nga time-a, siyempre first time pa nako, ganahan ko makakita sa mga faces sa mga studyante. Pag human sa pandemic mga 2022 to, naay studyante nga muundang, wa siyay sulod2 sa klase so as a teacher nag homevisit ko, times nga ing-ana nalibot na nakong tibuok Zaragosa. So ing ana feel nako fulfilling siya ba nga makatabang sa studyante. Ang mga bata gud, friendly siya, approachable ug kanang masultian sa problema. Kuan man pod sila gud, mo set sila ug boundaries ba, mao pod ako naganahan. So mao na akong mga meaningful experiences”

(Part of my meaningful learning experiences is the collaboration with my co-teachers. During my class, my students are participative—though not all, but I really like and want them to participate with their will. During my first teaching, I really felt the excitement, the joy to teach students. When the pandemic ended in 2022, one of my students wanted to quit school—absences, no communication. What I did was a home-visit. During those instances, I was able to travel all parts of the island. With my experiences I can feel that it was really fulfilling to help students. They are friendly, approachable and a listener to my problems (not personal). They set boundaries which I really consider much. So that was my meaningful experiences.)

Participant 3 shared that one of the most meaningful parts of their teaching journey was the sense of camaraderie and teamwork with fellow educators. The classroom felt especially rewarding when students were engaged and participating, though this wasn’t always the case. In the early days of teaching, there was a strong sense of excitement and purpose that kept them motivated. One moment that truly stood out happened after the pandemic in 2022. A student began to withdraw, often absent and hard to reach. Instead of giving up, the teacher took it upon themselves to make a home visit searching around the island just to reconnect with the learner. That experience, though tiring, brought a deep sense of fulfillment (Villanueva & Lopez, 2020). What touched them the most was how students, despite their own struggles, remained warm, respectful, and thoughtful and often showing concern for their teacher’s well-being too. That mutual care and understanding helped build a classroom environment rooted in empathy, respect, and community, making even the hardest days feel worthwhile.

Participant 4 stated, “My meaningful experience, is discovering a deeper sense of patience and purpose in life. Teaching in an island school made me realize so many things about how resourceful I can be when materials are limited and doing my best in order to supplement what is lacking. Seeing my students strive despite their hardships reminds me why this job is worth it. They inspire me just as much as I hope to inspire them in their life.”

Participant 4 shared that teaching in an island school has been one of the most meaningful and life-shaping experiences. Through this journey, they discovered a more profound sense of patience and a stronger sense of purpose. Facing limited resources challenged them to become more innovative and resourceful, pushing them to find ways to provide meaningful learning experiences and meet students’ needs despite the constraints (Kumar & Rahman, 2025). Rather than seeing these limitations as setbacks, Participant 4 viewed them as opportunities to grow, adapt, and give their best to their students. Despite facing personal and professional hardships, the steadfast determination reflected in the student’s eyes remained, and they continued to show up with eagerness and hope.

Participant 2 said, “The meaningful learning experience is to adapt every challenge and difficulties of life may bring. In our life let us embrace the calmness of the waves and let us dance with the big waves during bad weather. I am grateful these innumerable experiences while travelling from mainland to the island of Zaragoza and vice versa.”

Participant 2 articulated that a fundamental strategy for managing life’s inherent uncertainties is the capacity for adaptability. They compared this to the metaphor of “Dancing with the big waves” to illustrate the importance of confronting life’s challenges not with apprehension, but with courage, composure, and flexibility. Just like the ocean, life comes with ups and downs. These shifts can be unsettling, but they also offer valuable and sometimes even enjoyable experiences when embraced with the proper perspective. With courage and trust in their resilience, nothing feels impossible. They believe they can find their way through even the most challenging times by flowing with life’s changes while remaining steadfast (Magno, 2024). They further posited that true courage is not defined by the absence of fear, but by a profound trust in one’s resilience and capabilities when navigating such turbulent circumstances.

The third theme, Voices of Experience, captures the heartfelt reflections of educators who have grown personally and professionally through their service in Zaragoza’s island schools. Their narratives reveal how teaching in a remote, resource-limited setting cultivates resilience, adaptability, and a deeper sense of purpose. Despite the challenges—from difficult sea travel to student disengagement—teachers find meaning in small victories and human connections, such as rekindling a student’s motivation through home visits or building mutual respect in the classroom. These experiences highlight not just the hardships, but the emotional fulfillment that comes

from teaching with empathy, dedication, and hope in a setting where both teachers and students continuously inspire one another.

Theme 4: Encounters with Learning

Theme four which is Encounters with Learning highlights the profound and meaningful experiences of teachers, which emphasizes the different lessons they have gained and the professional growth they have achieved through their unwavering dedication and commitment. Despite the many challenges and hardships, they face, these educators continue to show remarkable resilience and growth. Their perseverance and determination to teach on the island develop them as a person and strengthen their skills as a teacher, using every struggle and challenge as an opportunity for learning and purpose.

Participant 4 expressed, “Teaching in Zaragosa Island has been physically and mentally demanding, yet it has shaped me into someone more patient and emotionally strong. I’ve learned how to stay calm under pressure, and how to keep teaching even when I’m worried about the tide or the weather. It’s not always easy, but worth it.”

According to Participant 4, teaching in Zaragosa Island has tested her limits in both physical and mental strength. However, these experiences and challenges helped her to develop a developed and emotionally grounded individual. When she experiences pressure, she learns too and continues teaching despite challenges like the tide or unpredictable weather. The environment has taught her to let go of what she cannot control and to focus instead on what she can offer (Pancho, 2023). For her, the hardships are undeniable and often exhausting but the sense of growth, purpose and fulfillment they gain toward academic success makes it all worthwhile. It is in these moments that she finds meaning, not just as a teacher, but as a person continually shaped by the very challenges she once feared.

Participant 2 stated, “I’ve come to see this journey like the sea which is calm some days, wild on others. But always full of wonder. Every trip to Zaragosa gives me time to reflect, to breathe, to be grateful. I’ve learned not to fight the waves, but to ride with them. Even on the hardest days, I remind myself of the joy this job brings, the smiles, the laughter, the life lessons. The challenges are real, but so is the beauty. I’m not just a teacher; I’m someone who learns from the sea, the skies, and the stories I live each day.”

Whether life is easy or tough, it is always neat being on this journey,” said Participant 2. The metaphor serves to illustrate how their mindsets around concepts of acceptance, self-reflection and flexibility change in whatever they come across as entrepreneurs. Each time they halt in Zaragosa, they can unwind and appreciate how grateful they are, indicating that their profession helps them grow as individuals. If you ride the difficulties, it means seeing struggle as an opportunity for learning and showing great appreciation for all the happiness in your day-to-day life (Alontaga, 2021). In the long run, they see their role as more than just a teacher because they are also shaped by the events and nature surrounding them.

Participant 3 expressed, “Ang pinakastick gyud nako kay dili lang ang mga leksyon nga akong gitudlo, kundi katong mga butang nga akong natun-an pud gikan sa akong mga kauban nga magtutudlo, sa mga estudyante, ug bisan kadtong mga lakaw-lakaw sa baybay. Nakasabot ko nga ang pagtudlo, dili lang diay para sa usa lang ka tawo. Usa ni ka paningkamot nga nagtinabangay mi tanan. Nakat-on ko nga musalig sa uban ug mahimong kasaligan pud sa uban. Usahay, ang pinakanindot nga mga kasinatian dili ra diay makita sa sulod sa classroom naa pud sa mga home visit, istorya-istorya, o sa hilom nga byahe buntag sayo. Mao gyud na’y nakapabug-at ug bili sa among panaw.”

(What sticks with me the most aren’t just the lessons I teach, but the ones I’ve learned which are from my co-teachers, from my students, even from the long walks across the shoreline. I’ve discovered that teaching isn’t something we do alone. It’s a shared experience. I’ve learned to lean on others and to be someone others can lean on too. I’ve learned that some of the most meaningful moments happen outside the classroom — on home visits, during conversations, or in the quiet of early morning travel. That’s what makes this journey worth it.)

Teaching on the Island of Zaragosa, according to Participant 3, means dealing with definite issues but also brings her joy. The trip between the island and the mainland is not easy or simple, even so, It provides unforgettable scenes as the sun rises and sets. Regardless of the awkward moments here and there, the journey has been very pleasing. Certain people who work there advise moving to the island to be ready for any emergencies and avoid problems (Laurente & Cardoza, 2024). Before the accident, everyone boarded the same boats for travel, but the rules changed due to what happened. Through the unpredictable nature of these challenges, traveling was an important and unavoidable part of teaching. The example shows how teachers are flexible and ermined, and discover the appeal of the daily task of island commuting.

Participant 1 stated, “Teaching here has taught me a different kind of strength which is the kind you don’t always notice at first. There are days I’m tired before I even reach the classroom, and yet, once I see my students, something shifts. I’ve learned that consistency, even in the face of unpredictable weather or low tide, is powerful. I’ve also learned to be resourceful, to make do with what’s available and that’s power, the power to push through even when things are tough. I’m not just teaching lessons; I’m living one every day.”

Participant 1’s reflection reveals the quiet resilience and deep commitment required of teachers in challenging environments particularly those assigned to remote island communities. Despite physical depletion from travel and the unpredictability of their surroundings, the teacher draws strength and motivation from the presence and eagerness of their students, showing how purpose can overcome hardship, and encouraging them to pursue academic success and endeavor (Felongco, 2022). Their words emphasize how a strong sense of purpose can become the power of consistency and resourcefulness, turning limited resources into meaningful learning

experiences for the betterment of their students and their learning. More than simply teaching lessons, the teacher reflects the values they want their students to learn through perseverance, adaptability, and quiet strength, making their work a powerful example of the life-changing impact of education and remaining devoted to their purpose, even when the road is difficult.

Participant 5 said, “Every time I step onto that boat, I remind myself why I’m doing this. It’s not easy such as waking up early, racing against the tide, arriving soaked or exhausted. This place, this job, has taught me a lot of things such as resilience, patience, and above all, purpose. I’ve learned to adapt, to stay calm, to laugh at the little things. I may be tired some days, but I never feel empty because this work fills me with meaning it gives me the drive to move forward. And that’s something I’ll always carry with me.”

Participant 5’s reflection highlights the profound sense of purpose that sustains them through the physical and emotional challenges of their teaching journey that despite the challenges they face they are still able to surpass it with a smile and a great sense of fulfillment within them. Their daily struggle which are getting up early before the sun even rises, battling the relentless tides, and bearing fatigue didn’t matter. Instead, it becomes a foundation for deeper lessons in resilience, patience, and adaptability (Gonzales, 2021). Despite the hardships and the continuous challenges they encounter within and beyond their control, they still find fulfillment and perseverance in their work. Their ability to find joy even in small moments and stay focused on their purpose shows how commitment to a cause can change even the most difficult days into a source of strength and power, ensuring that no struggle can be surpassed in the teacher’s grit.

Theme Four, Encounters with Learning, illustrates the profound journey of teachers on Zaragosa Island, unveiling their challenges and struggles on how they face their physical and emotional challenges in life are the key motivators for growth and purpose. By embracing resilience, patience, and flexibility, these educators learn to become resilient and thrive despite obstacles whether it’s battling tides, unpredictable weather, or exhausting travel. Their struggles and experiences develop them into stronger, more powerful and more thoughtful individuals empowering their growth and perseverance. Their stories show that teaching is not just about delivering lessons but about living them drawing strength from nature, community, and the joy of guiding young minds, in order not to perform their duty as teachers but to be an inspiration, a role model to children could look up to and that despite the hardships, their unwavering dedication turns every obstacle into a meaningful opportunity for personal and professional development.

Theme 5: Surmounting the Odds

Theme five which is Surmounting the Odds focuses on the practical recommendations and aspirations of teachers aimed at enhancing their overall well-being and work conditions. This highlights the importance of conducting targeted strategies and policies to overcome those problems with the help of flexible and reliable schedules and emphasizes the unique challenges faced by teachers who experience commuting on a boat to reach Zaragosa Island. The theme underscores the different collective desire for sustainable improvements that would not only facilitate safer and also create a more efficient travel but also promote the physical, emotional, and professional welfare of the island-based teacher.

Participant 1 expressed, “Even for those of us who have our own boats, additional support is still essential. There is a need for improved docking areas or safer pathways to make crossing easier, especially during low tide. Providing subsidized transportation or school-owned boats with reliable schedules would help ensure safer and more consistent travel. Teachers who use personal boats would also benefit from fuel allowances or support for boat maintenance. The construction of temporary teacher quarters or resting areas on the island would be helpful, especially during emergencies, bad weather, or after late school events. It would also be beneficial to coordinate more effectively with LGUs and DepEd to create schedules and systems that consider the unique travel challenges we face, possibly through flexible work arrangements. Lastly, implementing mental health and wellness programs for island-based teachers is crucial, as we constantly deal with both physical and emotional stress, and sustaining our well-being directly impacts our ability to continue serving our students.”

Participant 1 emphasized the unique challenges faced by island teachers, particularly the daily travel required to reach their schools. To address these difficulties, they suggested improving docking areas to ensure safer and more efficient crossings, and providing school-owned boats with fixed schedules to ease transportation concerns. They also recommended fuel allowances or maintenance support for teachers who use personal boats, as well as the construction of temporary accommodations for those needing to stay overnight (Reyes, 2019). Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of coordinating with local authorities to allow for more flexible work arrangements and safety. In addition to this, the implementation of mental health programs to support teacher well-being and reduce stress should also be one of the factors to be considered. These practical and compassionate suggestions reflect a deep understanding of the realities faced by educators in remote areas and underscore the need for systemic support.

Participant 2 stated, “For me, the first and most important thing is to ensure our safety—not just our physical safety, but also the security of the things we carry every day like our cellphones, laptops, and important school documents. These are not just tools for work, but also lifelines when we are far from home and dealing with unpredictable weather or sea conditions.”

Participants 2 explained the importance of personal safety and securing important belongings like phones, laptops, and important documents during daily travel to Zaragosa Island. They also mentioned embracing the journey with a positive mindset and putting God above all means with prayers, encouraging every traveler to enjoy and see the beauty of coastal areas like Zaragosa Island.

Participant 3 mentioned, “Sa kadugayan, na enjoy man nako ang pag travel2 sa island back and forth bisag kahibalo ko naa juy times nga hasol siya. Dili man ko ingon sa akua nga part pero sa mga teachers nga lagyo ba. If lagyo ila, didto na lang sila mamuyo ba ron sa duol2 lang ug convenient gani ang pag travel. Saona makahinumdom ko, makisabay ko sa ubang teachers nga mura ganig pakyaw ilang transpo gani, naa poy times nga duka kaayo ko ato nga hapit nako alas 7 nakasakay. Usually baya early kaayo manglakaw ang ubang mga maestra.”

(Teaching on the island has been both challenging and rewarding. While traveling daily can be a hassle, I’ve learned to find joy in the journey, especially because I get to witness breathtaking sunrises and sunsets. Some teachers suggest living on the island to avoid the daily commute, and I agree it would make things easier, but I’ve grown to appreciate the travel itself. I remember when someone used to pick us up at the shore and three teachers shared one boat, but after an accident, the system changed for safety reasons. These days, I sometimes find myself running late and getting to the terminal around 7 a.m., thanks to my sleepyhead tendencies, but overall, I’ve come to embrace the experience and the unique beauty that comes with it.)

As Participant 3 mentioned, teaching on Zaragoza Island presents both challenges and a sense of happiness. Their daily travel from the mainland to the island can be physically demanding and logically difficult, but at the same time, it also brings joy- especially through the breathtaking views of sunrises and sunsets. The experience has been fulfilling despite the infrequent inconvenience. Some colleagues recommend relocating and living on the island for better access to the school and less hassle. In the past, transportation involved shared boat rides, but protocols changed following a past accident. Despite these unpredictable challenges, traveling itself became an integral part of the teaching journey (Kumar & Rahman, 2025). The experience illustrates how teachers adapt, persevere, and even find beauty in the routine of island commuting.

Participant 4 stated, “I suggest setting up a reliable communication system that can work even in remote areas , like emergency radios so teachers can easily call for help during bad weather or unexpected delays as well as offering training workshops on safety and first aid specific to island travel would also empower us to handle emergencies better and avoid trauma.”

Participant 4 suggest the importance of having a reliable communication system especially those teachers who teach in coastal areas. Provide those teachers with emergency radios, to ensure that teachers can easily ask for help during bad weather or unexpected delays in coastal areas like Zaragoza Island. Also, training workshops for safety and first aid are tailored to island travel. Lastly, to improve emergency preparedness and to reduce or avoid unnecessary traumas.

As Participant 5 mentioned , “ I think having a flexible schedule that accounts for unpredictable weather and travel delays would greatly ease the pressure on our lives as well as improving access to healthcare services on the island for the teachers and their families to have a much more secure and comfortable environment to live in. ”

As Participant 5 noted, conducting a more flexible schedule would help teachers adapt to delayed travel due to unpredictable weather conditions, consequently, lessen stress and better access to healthcare services for both teachers and their families. Ensuring safe and comfortable living accommodations is necessary to ensure their overall quality of life.

Theme Five, Surmounting the Odds, encapsulates the practical recommendations and heartfelt aspirations of teachers committed to improving their working conditions and overall well-being while serving in Zaragoza Island. Participants emphasized the urgent need for safer and more consistent transportation—through improved docking facilities, school-owned boats with regular schedules, fuel or maintenance support for personal boats, and the construction of temporary housing for overnight stays. They also highlighted the importance of implementing flexible work schedules that account for unpredictable sea conditions, enhancing access to healthcare services, and introducing mental health programs to support emotional resilience. Teachers called for better emergency preparedness through reliable communication tools like radios and safety-focused training. Despite the physical and logistical demands of daily commuting, many educators have learned to embrace the journey, drawing strength and inspiration from both the natural beauty of their surroundings and the relationships they’ve built with colleagues and students. These reflections underscore a shared desire for systemic change rooted in compassion, safety, and sustainability.

Conclusions

Teaching is indeed a noble profession. Some teachers are assigned to difficult stations, such as teaching on an island. Their challenges and milestones are meaningful, which can help incoming teachers become cognizant of the preparations, coping mechanisms, and possible interventions when problems arise. The lived experience of the participant can be summarized in a single word that encapsulates their everyday life situation – this is WAVES. The waves that they need to overcome and embrace whenever they go to school, are to transform the lives of many pupils and stay committed to their mission. The participants experienced the Waves in teaching where they can withstand the tides, Make necessary adjustments and do incessantly while listening to the voices echoing within themselves and their learners, where both encounter learning that can be used in surmounting the odds of life. Teaching in Zaragoza gives sufficient knowledge on how teachers are battling the waves of life. This resonates with their resiliency and adaptability in rising above all the problems they encounter, not just with the teaching pedagogies, but also in managing their teaching career, where they live life with significance.

The expediency of making changes in the policies and providing hazard pay among teachers teaching in the islands in the Philippines

should be revisited for further increase of benefits and privileges in terms of allowances health, and wellness. This study highly recommends a deep study on the lived experiences of the school administrators in handling schools in the different islands since administrative support is important in improving the teaching performance of the teachers and the effective facilitation of their instructional and supervisory obligations in addition to this the need for safer and more consistent transportation — through improved docking facilities, school-owned boats with regular schedules, fuel or maintenance support for personal boats, and the construction of temporary housing for overnight stays should also be taken into account for. Future researchers can conduct mixed-method research triangulating the quantitative and qualitative data on the extent of perception and experiences of the teachers when assigned to an island.

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