ATTRITION AND TURN OVER: EXPLORING THE MULTIFACETED FACTORS INFLUENCES TEACHERS' CAREER DECISIONS

Attrition and Turn Over: Exploring the Multifaceted Factors Influences Teachers' Career Decisions

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Abstract

This study investigated multifaceted factors contributing to teacher attrition in the Division of Iligan City. It focused on four major factors influencing teacher attrition: personal, professional, organizational, and socio-economic, employing qualitative inquiry through a phenomenological research method. The study involved ten former teachers from Division of Iligan City, who left their positions for other opportunities. Data were collected through interviews using open-ended questionnaire, allowing respondents to articulate their experiences and perspectives. The analysis utilized specialized qualitative data software, including NVivo, MAXQDA, Atlas.ti, QDA Miner, and Dedoose, to process the narratives and identify significant themes. Findings revealed that personal factors such as workload, work-life balance, burnout, family responsibilities, and financial security heavily influenced teacher attrition, highlighting the need for reduced workloads and support for personal stability. Professional factors emerged as critical contributors, with themes of perceived inequities in promotion, inconsistent recognition, lack of support, and limited professional development opportunities driving teachers' decisions to leave public school positions. Organizational factors, including heavy workloads, administrative burdens, and inadequate resources and infrastructure, were significant challenges that led to exhaustion and frustration among educators. Socio-economic factors, such as salary issues, insufficient benefits, and financial insecurity, underscored the need for competitive compensation and support for financial stability. Efforts to curb attrition and enhance teacher retention were expected to be in place with programs, such as competitive salaries, benefit packages, and workload management, performance-based incentives, and professional development.

Keywords: *multi-faceted factors, teachers' attrition, Iligan City Division, department of education*

Introduction

In the last few years, teacher attrition which resulted in teacher turnover has attracted a lot of attention. Peck (2023) emphasized that high rates of turnover can lead to disruptions in the learning environment, a lack of continuity in educational programs, and challenges in maintaining a seasoned and skilled teaching workforce. Several factors contribute to teacher turnover, including but not limited to, inadequate support and resources, insufficient professional development opportunities, challenging working conditions, and non-competitive salaries (Mahmood et al., 2022; Thaba et al., 2022; Boamah, 2022). The Philippines faced a persistent challenge in retaining qualified and experienced teachers within the Department of Education. Teacher attrition, referring to the departure of teachers from the profession or the DepEd system, has significant implications for educational quality, student outcomes, and the overall effectiveness of the education system.

Several teachers leave the Department of Education (DepEd) in search of better opportunities, particularly in the foreign land like United States of America (USA) and Thailand. The departure of skilled professionals from an agency can be alarming, as it may indicate a lack of job satisfaction, better opportunities elsewhere, or a lack of career advancement within the agency. This, in turn, could potentially impact the quality of education provided by the agency. Some teachers in the Philippines may be seeking higher pay, as teaching in other countries often comes with more competitive salaries. This condition leads to increase rate of teacher turnover, also called teacher migration.

Teacher turnover is a serious issue throughout the Philippines, replicating difficulties within the education system around the world. There are plenty of institutional, policy-driven, and socioeconomic variables which lead to teacher turnover in the entire country. In spite of impeding with students' continuous learning, this problem makes harder for educational systems to keep up an efficient and steady workforce. The departure of experienced teachers from the field brings about a loss of understanding and mentorship, which decreases the standard of instruction overall. As of the data gathered in the division of Iligan City in the year 2022, there were thirteen (13) teachers who transferred to other agencies and sixteen (16) teachers who resigned to teach abroad. In the year 2023, on the other hand, there were eleven (11) teachers who transferred to other agencies and forty-two (42) who resigned to teach abroad. Consequently, for the year 2024, as of April, there were three (3) who transferred to other agencies and six (6) who resigned to work abroad (DepEd Records, Iligan City Division, 2024).

The Executive Order No. 174, s. 2022, which pertains to the "Adoption of the Career Progression System for Public School Teachers," aims to provide public school teachers with a clear and structured pathway for career advancement, recognizing the importance of professional growth and motivation in the teaching profession. It is a significant step towards enhancing the career progression system for public school teachers in the Philippines, ensuring that their growth is supported by clear pathways and opportunities for advancement. The success of the new career progression system depends on the effective implementation of DepEd and other relevant agencies, which may vary significantly in practice. E.O. 174, s. 2022 faces challenges like uneven implementation, resource limitations,

teacher pressure, and system complexity. Effective planning, funding, and teacher support are crucial for achieving professional growth and equity.

The purpose of this study was to explore and analyze the various factors contributing to teacher attrition in the Department of Education (DepEd). This focused on identifying key challenges related to professional development, compensation and benefits, school leadership, work conditions, and intentions or reasons for leaving. This study would also provide actionable recommendations for reducing teacher turnover and improving retention rates.

The foregoing study was conducted in the Division of Iligan City, in particular, with the former teachers, not yet retired, or the migrating teachers who were once teaching in the schools belonging to the Division of Iligan City. It was conducted this School Year 2024 – 2025.

The findings of this study were anticipated to make a substantial contribution to the existing body of knowledge and literature, providing valuable insights that could pave the way for effective solutions to address teacher attrition. By shedding light on the root causes, challenges, and potential strategies for retaining educators, this research aimed to support the development of evidence-based policies and practices that ensure a more stable and dedicated teaching workforce. Such contributions could ultimately enhance the quality of education and strengthen the overall efficiency of educational systems.

Research Questions

This study determined the public high school teachers in Iligan City Division. The research intended to locate the potential problems which could help devise approaches to decrease teacher turnover and increase retention. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How have the following multi-faceted factors influenced their decision to leave the teaching profession, and what underlying beliefs, values, or personal philosophies shaped their responses to each factor:
    1.1. personal;
    1.2. professional;
    1.3. organizational; and
    1.4. socio-economic?
2. What employees' retention plan may be proposed based on the findings of the study?

Methodology

Research Design

The study applied the phenomenology research method. In qualitative research, phenomenology is an approach that focused and understand the subjective, lived experiences and perspectives of participants. Actual experience referred to a representation of the choices as well as experiences of one particular person, and their acquired knowledge as a result of these decisions and experiences. The approach's primary objective was to describe the nature of the particular occurrence (Creswell, 2018). Phenomenology seeks to uncover the underlying meaning of these experiences by examining them from the first-person perspective, it aims to offer comprehensive understandings of human experiences through looking at them from the viewpoints of the participants, emphasizing the substance of those experiences and the interpretations corresponding to them.

Respondents

This study aimed to examine the factors contributing to teacher attrition within the Iligan City Division of the Department of Education, with a particular focus on a purposive sample of ten (10) former teachers from the Iligan City. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method designed to identify individuals who met specific, predefined criteria that aligned with the study's objectives. The selection criteria required participants to be former teachers who had previously served in schools within Iligan Division, and who had left the DepEd-Iligan City Division within the past five years.

The use of a limited sample size was an intentional methodological decision, given the small number of individuals meeting these stringent requirements. While a larger sample might have enhanced the generalizability and robustness of the findings, this targeted approach allowed for the inclusion of participants with highly pertinent experiences. By narrowing the focus to this select group, the study facilitated in-depth qualitative interviews, enabling the collection of rich and comprehensive data on their perspectives, experiences, and the factors that contributed to their departure from teaching positions. Focusing on a smaller, well-defined sample, the study successfully captured nuanced insights into the multifaceted issues surrounding teacher attrition. These findings offer valuable contributions to understanding the dynamics of teacher retention and provide practical recommendations for addressing this critical challenge within the Division of Iligan City.

Instrument

An open-ended questionnaire was utilized in the interviews as the research tool for this study because of its capacity to probe deeply into the complex elements influencing teacher attrition. Workload, pay, professional growth, administrative support, classroom

dynamics, family obligations, career goals, personal well-being, economic conditions, social pressures, and prospects in other industries are just a few of the important topics that will be covered in the interview guide. Open-ended questions and thought-provoking prompts will be incorporated throughout the guide to promote thorough answers and reveal complex viewpoints.

This study used the researcher-made questionnaire which was validated by the English Department in the Division of Iligan City experts namely: Dr. Carlito A. Abarquez, Dr. Joan Enad, and Dr. Myra A. Ambalong. The teacher-made questionnaire has 5 parts, personal factors, professional factors, organizational factors, socioeconomic factors and retention and support.

The researcher used specialized software made for qualitative data analysis to handle the challenges of interpreting the semi-structured interviews' qualitative data. With strong features including coding, categorization, visualization, and collaboration tools, popular choices include NVivo, MAXQDA, Atlas.ti, QDA Miner, and Dedoose. Research goals, financial limitations, program usability, and data type compatibility were some of the variables that influenced the software selection. These technologies make it possible to effectively organize a variety of data formats, such as multimedia files, field recordings, audio recordings, and interview transcripts. Finding recurrent themes, patterns, and connections across enormous datasets is made possible by researchers' ease of coding and categorizing content. This not only improved the awareness of that the information but also organizes improved interaction of outcomes to participants. Through the use of these sophisticated instruments, researchers may present findings in an efficient manner. The researcher chose the best software for effectively evaluating the rich, qualitative data collected from the former teachers by looking into free trials and demos and taking community support into account. This ultimately gave a thorough grasp of the elements influencing teacher attrition in Iligan City Division.

Procedure

The data gathering of this study acted in accordance with the activities chartered in this preference. Getting formal approval to carry out the study was the first step. The first activity was to obtain an official permission to conduct the study in the proposed environment from the Schools Division Superintendent and school principal. After obtaining the approval letter to conduct the study from the Schools Division Superintendent and the school principal, the researcher coordinated with the principal to request the names of teachers who had left the Department of Education. Using the provided list, the identified individuals were reached out through direct messaging, introducing myself explaining the purpose of the study, inviting them to participate and explaining to them why their participation is important and their involvement can contribute to the success of the research.

In obtaining informed consent from each participant, a message was sent to them that provides the necessary details (study objectives, their rights as participants, confidentiality, etc.). Explicit consent was insured to be gathered before starting the data collection, after they agree to participate, they were then informed that interviews, and other form of data collection will be used for the study. Scheduled synchronous online interviews via Facebook Messenger, using its video or voice call features, were used ensuring the environment is conducive to discussions.

For the online discussion forum, a video conferencing platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams were used to facilitate the session. These platforms provided essential features such as screen sharing, chat options, and secure meeting links, ensuring a smooth and professional discussion environment. Additionally, the built-in recording feature of these platforms was utilized to capture the entire session for transcription and analysis. This ensured that all participant responses were accurately documented while maintaining data security and confidentiality. After the study has concluded, follow up with each participant were conducted and thanking them for their time and participation, and remind them of their ability to ask questions or request a summary of the findings if they are interested.

If there are responses that are unclear or incomplete or if any answer that are ambiguous a follow-up with the participant for clarification were done. Member checking were then applied after the interview, returning to some of the participants to verify whether the interpretations of their statements accurately reflected their intended meanings. After data collection, the interviews were transcribed using thematic analysis to identify the patterns and recurring themes across participants' narratives, these involves familiarizing the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and refining those themes and defining and naming them.

The researcher utilized specialist qualitative data analysis tools, like NVivo or Atlas.ti, to examine the qualitative data collected for the project. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software used to organize, analyze, and interpret unstructured data like interviews, focus groups, surveys, social media content, and more. It helps researchers manage and analyze large volumes of text, audio, video, and other multimedia data. NVivo is commonly used in academic, social research, and market research for deep qualitative analysis, helping researchers extract meaningful insights from complex data.

The researcher found patterns, themes, and connections in the responses thanks to these tools, which were made to make it easier to organize, code, and interpret textual data. It can effectively manage vast volumes of data, create visual representations like word clouds or thematic maps, and guarantee a methodical and exacting analytical process by using this software. This strategy improved the study's findings' depth and believable.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study involved a thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected through interviews, online group discussions, and questionnaires. The responses were transcribed and systematically coded using qualitative analysis software, such as

NVivo or Atlas.ti, to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the Multifaceted Factors Influencing Teacher Attrition in the Department of Education - Iligan City Division. The coding process included categorizing data into themes, such as workload, compensation, career growth, and work environment. The results of the study highlighted key challenges and motivators for teacher attrition, providing insights into the underlying causes and potential interventions to address the issue. Findings were presented through narrative descriptions, supported by direct quotes from participants, and illustrated with thematic maps or models for clarity.

Results and Discussion

This section outlines and discusses the findings of the study on the manifold contributory factors of teacher attrition in the Department of Education (DepEd). The responses of the participants were analyzed and categorized into key themes, including personal, professional, organizational, and socio-economic factors. These themes were explored comprehensively to reveal patterns and embedded causes, supported by the personal responses or direct quotes from the participants. This approach guarantees an in-depth and contextual understanding of the phenomenon, offering valuable insights for stakeholders and education leaders who aim to address teacher attrition essentially.

Problem 1. How have the following multi-faceted factors influenced your decision to leave the teaching profession, and what underlying beliefs, values, or personal philosophies shaped your response to each factor: personal, professional, organizational, socioeconomic?

Table 1. *Personal Factors*

Themes	Sub-Themes/Key Points
Financial Considerations	Seeking Better Compensation
	Opportunity Abroad
Work Load and Job Stress	Excessive Workloads
	Burnout and Stress
	Lack of Work-Life Balance
Professional Growth and Recognition	Career Advancement
	Cultural Exchange and Learning Opportunities
Family Responsibilities and Dynamics	Balancing Family and Work
	Supportive Family Environment
Personal Well – Being	Health Concerns
	Intrinsic Motivation
Institutional and Systemic Issues	Administrative Challenges
	Job Satisfaction and Environment

Financial Considerations

A recurring motivation for teachers considering leaving their current posts is the pursuit of better compensation. As one participant shared, "Teaching is my passion, but I also need to provide for my family. I heard from colleagues that salaries abroad are more than double what we earn here" (S1). Another echoed, "If given the chance to teach abroad, I would go, not only for the salary but also for the experience" (S6). This sentiment was consistent across several interviews (S1, S5, S8), highlighting that financial factor significantly influenced career decisions.

Teachers often seek opportunities abroad for better compensation and financial stability. A study by Bustos and Marapao (2025) in the Philippines highlighted that while teachers possess high financial literacy, challenges in debt management and overspending persist, impacting their overall performance. This underscored the financial pressures influencing teachers' decisions to pursue better-paying opportunities.

Workload and Job Stress

Participants described an overwhelming workload that often extended beyond teaching responsibilities. A teacher remarked, "Most of my time is spent on paperwork. Teaching is just one part of the job now" (S2). Another added, "The number of reports and forms we need to submit is draining. It's like we're clerks, not educators" (S4). These responses (S2, S3, S4, S5, S6) indicated that administrative tasks contributed greatly to burnout.

The psychological toll of such workload is notable. "I feel so stressed every day. I hardly have time to breathe, let alone rest" (S5), one teacher lamented. Several also mentioned struggling to find balance: "After school, I still have to bring work home. There's no line between work and personal time" (S7). This lack of work-life balance (S2, S4, S5, S7) was a key factor leading to dissatisfaction.

Excessive workloads and administrative tasks contributed significantly to teacher stress and burnout. Gudelos and Mabitad (2025) found that senior high school teachers in the Philippines experience high levels of stress due to workload, which adversely affects their performance. Additionally, a meta-analysis by Martínez-López et al. (2023) revealed that the global prevalence of burnout among teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic was 52%, indicating a widespread issue.

Professional Growth and Recognition

Many teachers expressed a desire for professional advancement. "I want to grow, to be promoted, or to specialize in something. But here, opportunities are limited" (S2). Another reflected, "I want to learn new teaching strategies from other countries. I believe it will make me a better educator" (S7). The aspiration to enhance skills and gain international experience (S1, S7) reflected a strong inclination toward continuous learning and recognition of one's expertise. Teachers sought professional development and recognition to enhance their careers. Olarte and Tagadiad (2025) emphasized that perceived instructional supervision and work-life balance significantly influenced teachers' commitment to change and professional growth.

Family Responsibilities and Dynamics

Family was both a motivation and a challenge. Teachers shared how they juggle work and home duties: "My children are still young. After school, I have to help them with their own studies and take care of household chores" (S4). Others emphasized the role of family in their decisions: "My husband supports me. He even encourages me to pursue opportunities abroad" (S3). These narratives (S2, S3, S4, S5, S6) underscored the influence of family responsibilities and support systems on career planning.

Balancing family responsibilities with teaching duties poses challenges for educators. Laguna et al. (2023) conducted a phenomenological study revealing that teacher-parents struggle with time management and prioritizing tasks, affecting their productivity and work-life balance.

Personal Well-being

Job-related stress was closely linked to declining physical and mental health. One participant noted, "I've had health issues recently—migraines, fatigue. I think it's because of the stress from work" (S2). Another added, "Sometimes I just feel emotionally exhausted, but I keep going because I love teaching" (S3). This duality—between intrinsic motivation (S1, S3) and deteriorating well-being (S2, S4, S5)—illustrated the complexity of the teaching experience.

The well-being of teachers is crucial for effective teaching. Zewude et al. (2023) found that a strong sense of coherence and resilience mediates the impact of COVID-19-related stress on teachers' well-being. Similarly, Cammayo et al. (2023) reported that Filipino teachers engaged in remote learning experience high stress and emotional exhaustion, influenced by factors such as workload and teaching conditions.

Institutional and Systemic Issues

Challenges within the system also emerged as key concerns. "There are constant changes in the curriculum. It's hard to keep up and adjust our lesson plans all the time" (S6). A participant also commented, "There's not enough support from the administration. We're expected to deliver without being given the right tools or encouragement" (S7). Job satisfaction was closely tied to institutional environment (S7, S9), with some teachers feeling discouraged due to lack of systemic support.

Systemic challenges, such as administrative demands and curriculum changes, affect teacher satisfaction. A Pew Research Center study (2023) highlighted that 82% of K-12 teachers in the U.S. have a negative view of the current state of education, citing stress, overwhelming workloads, and lack of support as primary concerns.

The responses revealed that teachers' career decisions are shaped by a mix of personal, professional, and systemic factors. While financial motivations and opportunities abroad are appealing, burnout, lack of growth, and institutional pressures are pushing factors. Yet, amidst these challenges, many teachers still hold on to their passion for teaching, showing resilience and commitment.

Table 2. *Professional Factors*

Themes	Sub-Themes/Key Points
Systemic Challenges in Career Growth and Support	Inequitable Access to Opportunities
	Resource and Logistical Constraints
	Inconsistent Mentorship and Support
Professional Development and Support Systems	Formal Capacity-Building Initiatives
	Peer and Collegial Collaboration
	Role of Proactivity and Resilience
Recognition and Motivation	Gaps in Acknowledgement of Contribution
	Financial vs. Intrinsic Rewards
	Visibility and Equity in Recognition
Individual and Organizational Dynamics	Teacher-Related Barriers
	Organizational Culture and Leadership
	Cultural Perceptions of Growth

Systemic Challenges in Career Growth and Support

The interplay of favoritism, bureaucratic inefficiency, and uneven resource distribution emerged as critical barriers to career growth and recognition. While DepEd offers structured pathways like the PPST framework and ERF promotions (S7, S8), many teachers

perceive systemic inequities. For instance, Subject 2 (S2) criticized how trainings are allocated: "Only those close to the principal/admin are sent to trainings, not considering those in need." Similarly, promotions often favor connections over merit, as Subject 4 (S4) observed: "Promotions seemed more accessible to those with connections... I've seen colleagues serve 10 years as Teacher 1."

These inequities are compounded by bureaucratic delays, such as inconsistent Promotion Selection Board (PSB) standards (S5: "PSB Members have different interpretations of criteria"), leaving teachers like S5 disillusioned:

"Landing rank 1 in promotions but ending broken-hearted when stars don't align."

The lack of transparency fueled cynicism, particularly among teachers in under-resourced schools (S2: "Teachers in lesser-known schools feel ignored"). These systemic flaws highlighted a disconnect between DepEd's formal policies and their implementation, undermining trust in the organization's commitment to equity.

The interplay of favoritism, bureaucratic inefficiency, and uneven resource distribution has been identified as a significant barrier to career advancement among teachers. Despite the Department of Education's (DepEd) structured pathways like the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) framework and the Equivalents Record Form (ERF) promotions, many educators perceive systemic inequities. A study by Reyes (2020) revealed that nepotism and the "Padrino system" are prevalent in the educational sector, leading to unjust selection processes and hindering deserving teachers from advancing professionally.

The centralized nature of the Philippine education system often limits leadership opportunities to administrative roles, sidelining instructional leadership capacities. This structure perpetuates a principal-centered leadership model, which can stifle innovation and teacher empowerment. This structure perpetuates a principal-centered leadership model, which can stifle innovation and teacher empowerment.

Professional Development and Support Systems

DepEd's professional development programs—trainings, seminars, and mentorship—were praised for enhancing skills but criticized for inconsistent accessibility and logistical hurdles. Subject 1 (S1) lauded the impact of trainings: "Seminars and trainings help a lot... enhance your capability as a teacher." However, Subject 6 (S6) highlighted logistical issues:

"Trainings are done during summer or weekends... limited participants per school." This created a "two-tiered" system where proactive teachers thrive (S5: "Be resourceful and innovative"), while others struggle due to time constraints or favoritism.

Mentorship and peer collaboration also varied widely. While some benefited from cross-school mentorship (S2: "Proficient teachers' mentor less experienced ones"), others faced isolation due to inconsistent supervisor support. Subject 5 (S5) condemned toxic leadership:

"Supervisors act like queens... reprimand you if their names are missed."

Such dynamics underscore the need for standardized mentorship programs to ensure equitable guidance.

DepEd's professional development programs, while aimed at enhancing teachers' skills, often faced challenges related to accessibility and logistical support. Chin et al. (2022) found that financial constraints, scheduling conflicts, and lack of institutional support are significant barriers to teachers' participation in professional development activities. Teachers reported difficulties in attending trainings due to overlapping responsibilities and insufficient resources.

The implementation of professional development programs sometimes lacks consistency, leading to disparities in opportunities among teachers. The absence of a standardized mentorship program further exacerbates these disparities, leaving some educators without adequate guidance and support.

Recognition and Motivation

Recognition in DepEd was described as inconsistent and politicized, with a stark divide between financial and intrinsic rewards. While Subject 5 (S5) noted "praise and rewards motivate teachers," many felt undervalued. Subject 4 (S4), a MAPEH teacher, lamented: "I'm forced into school activities without compensation... Promotions? Hahaha!" Subject 7 (S7) echoed this, stating: Day-to-day efforts, like emotional labor, are overlooked... bonuses are insufficient." Formal recognition programs, such as the "Outstanding Teacher" award (S6), were seen as limited or biased. Subject 6 (S6) noted:

"Results are questionable because applicants self-nominate."

This politicization eroded morale, particularly for teachers in remote areas (S2: "No acknowledgment of hard work in lesser-known schools").

Recognition and motivation are critical factors influencing teacher performance and retention. However, inconsistencies and politicization in recognition systems have been reported. The Performance-Based Incentive (PBI) system, intended to reward exemplary performance, has been criticized for being delayed, discriminatory, and divisive. Teachers have expressed concerns over the fairness and transparency of such incentive systems.

The lack of acknowledgment for day-to-day efforts and emotional labor contributes to feelings of undervaluation among teachers. This is particularly evident in remote or under-resourced schools, where educators often go unrecognized despite their dedication and hard work.

Individual and Organizational Dynamics

The data revealed a tension between individual proactivity and organizational culture. Teachers like S3 emphasized resilience:

"Stay positive despite stress... do your best even without recognition."

Others, like S6, leveraged external trainings:

"I scouted for seminars... they helped me grow professionally." However, systemic barriers often penalize less assertive teachers. Subject 9 (S9) summarized this paradox: "DepEd offers opportunities for proactive individuals, but bureaucratic hurdles and limited resources hinder many."

The culture of complacency (S5: "Teachers refuse career growth to avoid responsibilities") further exacerbated stagnation, while toxic leadership (S5: "Queens of their empire") demoralizes even dedicated staff.

The dynamics between individual proactivity and organizational culture significantly impact teachers' professional growth. While some educators demonstrated resilience and sought external training opportunities, systemic barriers such as bureaucratic hurdles and limited resources can impede their progress. Junio (2024) highlighted that the removal of administrative tasks from teachers' responsibilities positively affects instructional quality and teacher empowerment. However, without systemic support, individual efforts may not translate into meaningful career advancement.

Toxic leadership and a culture of complacency within some educational institutions can demoralize even the most dedicated staff. Establishing a supportive organizational culture that values and nurtures teacher initiative is essential for sustainable professional development.

Table 3. *Organizational Factors*

Themes	Sub-Themes/Key Points
Workload and Resource Challenges	Heavy Workload and Burnout
	Inadequate Resources
	Mismanaged Priorities
	Financial Strain
Administrative and Policy Concerns	Bureaucratic Inefficiency
	Favoritism and Inequity
	Policy Instability
	Low Compensation
Support Systems and Professional Environment	Peer Support
	Lack of Administrative Support
	Professional Development Gaps
Systemic and Comparative Factors	Global Resources Disparities
	Opportunities Abroad
Organizational Culture and Leadership	Leadership Impact
	Toxic Work Environment

Workload and Resource Challenges

The burden of excessive workloads and resource shortages emerged as a dominant theme. Teachers like S2, S4, and S7 highlighted how heavy teaching loads, coupled with administrative tasks, led to burnout. S4 emphasized the strain of balancing classroom management with demands to "solicit just to make your classroom structure beautiful," critiquing mismanaged priorities that value aesthetics (e.g., curtains, decorations) over functional needs. This misalignment forces teachers like S5 and S10 to self-fund materials, exacerbating financial strain. S5 noted, "Teachers shelve out from their own pocket… afraid to be branded lazy," illustrating how resource gaps create both economic and professional vulnerability.

This theme is well-supported by Heffernan, Longmuir, and Thomson (2024), who argued that the complexity and overload of teachers' tasks—often including both instructional and administrative duties—are key contributors to professional exhaustion and emotional burnout. Similarly, Pressley (2021) identified high workloads and a lack of essential classroom resources as central to teacher stress, especially during the pandemic. The global education report by UNESCO (2021) further emphasized how chronic underfunding of public education systems exacerbates teachers' financial burdens, impacting morale and retention.

Administrative and Policy Concerns

Bureaucratic inefficiencies and inequitable policies further erode morale. Subjects criticized rigid policies (S2, S7) and unclear roles, such as S5 questioning the necessity of Public Schools District Supervisors. Favoritism in promotions (S1: "closer to administration,

more opportunities"; S10: "promotion depends on being an ally") undermines meritocracy, while policy instability (S4: "frequent changes in policies"; S7: "unclear promotion criteria") fosters distrust. Low compensation, highlighted by S1 ("salary") and S8 ("scraping by"), compounds dissatisfaction, pushing teachers to seek opportunities abroad (S1, S6).

The negative impact of bureaucratic inefficiencies and inconsistent policy implementation is echoed by Pressley (2021), who found that poor communication and policy instability significantly reduce teacher engagement and trust in leadership. Reyes and Daud (2023) further highlighted how favoritism in promotions undermines professional integrity and leads to perceptions of systemic injustice within school organizations. Additionally, Mansaray (2022) pointed out that teachers often feel alienated in rigid, top-down policy environments that fail to address grassroots realities, deepening dissatisfaction.

Support Systems and Professional Environment

While peer support (S1, S2, S10) mitigated stress, lack of administrative support intensified challenges. S5 noted technical assistance is "rare," while S6 described being promoted to Master Teacher without training, relying on "observation notes from previous supervisors." Such gaps in professional development leave teachers unprepared for leadership roles. Conversely, S10 credited colleagues for "keeping] me going," underscoring peer solidarity as a critical retention factor. The importance of collegial support as a buffer against stress is reinforced by Gavade, Sidotam, and Varanasi (2023), who observed that peer networks provide essential emotional and technical support in low-resource schools. However, Torres and Weiner (2022) argued that when teachers are promoted without sufficient training or mentoring, it led to increase anxiety and diminishe confidence in their professional roles. Ingersoll, Merrill, and Stuckey (2021) emphasized that structured professional development and consistent technical assistance are crucial to teacher retention and career satisfaction.

Systemic and Comparative Factors

Exposure to better-resourced systems, like S6's experience in California ("all students have laptops"), magnifies dissatisfaction with DepEd's limitations. Global disparities highlight systemic underinvestment in Philippine education, while opportunities abroad (S1, S6) lure teachers with higher salaries and career growth. Gavade et al. (2023) observed that teachers exposed to better-funded systems abroad often experience heightened disillusionment with their own working conditions, particularly when comparing access to technology and student support. The OECD (2022) supported this, noting that disparities in salary, workload, and professional growth opportunities between countries drive many educators to migrate. This concern is also evident in the findings of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2021), which underscored the role of structural underinvestment in pushing teachers to pursue more sustainable careers overseas.

Organizational Culture and Leadership

Leadership quality profoundly impacts retention. S9 and S10 emphasized that "supportive leadership" and "responsive policies" foster commitment, while S5's fear of being branded "incompetent" for resource shortages reflects a toxic work environment. Such cultures prioritize compliance over empathy, as seen in S4's critique of "excessive administrative requirements. The critical role of leadership in shaping a supportive and motivating work environment is underscored by Wang'ombe (2024), who found that empathetic and inclusive leadership practices directly influence teacher morale and retention. Day and Gu (2020) similarly suggested that a school's organizational culture—particularly when rooted in shared values and mutual respect—can sustain teachers through professional challenges. Kraft, Simon, and Lyon (2021) emphasized that positive school leadership is among the strongest predictors of teacher job satisfaction and long-term commitment.

These organizational factors illuminated a pattern of institutional neglect, inconsistent support, and misaligned priorities. While interpersonal support among teachers provides a buffer, it is not enough to compensate for systemic inefficiencies. Leadership, policy, and organizational culture must work in synergy to sustain teacher well-being and retention.

Table 4. *Socioeconomic Factors*

Themes	Sub-Themes/Key Points
Inadequate Compensation and Financial Strain	Salary vs. Cost of Living
	Need for Additional Income
	Impact on Quality of Life
Insufficient Benefits and Financial Instability	Healthcare and Insurance Shortcomings
	Retirement and Loan Accessibility
	Family and Future Security
Community Expectations and Social Pressures	Supportive vs. Pressuring Dynamics
	Role of Local politics
	Teacher-Parent Partnership Challenges
Neutral or Accustomed Pressures	Cultural Normalization of Stress

The decision of teachers to remain in or depart from the Department of Education (DepEd) is shaped by a complex interplay of socio-economic factors, institutional challenges, and community dynamics. The themes identified—inadequate compensation and financial strain, insufficient benefits and financial instability, community expectations and social pressures, and neutral or accustomed pressures.

Encabo & Ambalong

These revealed systemic issues that collectively eroded job satisfaction and drove attrition. They contextualized these findings with direct insights from teachers and existing literature to underscore their implications for policy and practice.

Inadequate Compensation and Financial Strain

Teachers universally emphasized the disconnect between salaries and the rising cost of living. S3 starkly noted, "It's not enough to feed 6 members of the family," while S10 criticized the nominal impact of salary increases: "You cannot feel the increase [due to taxes]." These sentiments aligned with Añonuevo's (2021) findings on stagnant wages failing to match inflation, leaving educators financially constrained. The emotional toll of this strain was captured by S4, who resigned because the salary "did not justify the workload and emotional toll," reinforcing De Guzman and dela Cruz's (2022) linkage between economic stress and attrition.

To mitigate financial strain, many teachers pursued additional income streams. S1 migrated as a J1 teacher, and S5 sought "greener pastures with less stress," exemplifying the push-pull framework. Salazar and Capuno (2020) stressed that low pay acted as a primary "push" factor. This exodus not only deprived DepEd of experienced educators but also reflected a broader trend of skilled labor migration in search of livable wages.

Insufficient Benefits and Financial Instability

The lack of robust benefits exacerbated financial insecurity. S1 and S6 highlighted inadequate healthcare access, with the latter lamenting, "I paid for healthcare but can't use it," echoing Reyes et al.'s (2021) assertion that poor benefit structures undermined well-being. S10 advocated for "low-cost housing like PNP/AFP," aligning with Tuazon and Ramirez's (2023) call for systemic support to enhance retention.

Long-term financial instability also impacts family planning. S8 left DepEd to secure her children's future: "Chances of sending them abroad would be zero if I stayed." This aligned with Lozano's (2022) findings that family-centric goals often conflicted with career sustainability in underfunded sectors. Without reforms in benefits and retirement plans, teachers remain vulnerable to economic precarity.

Community Expectations and Social Pressures

Community dynamics wield dual influence. While S1 and S10 found motivation in supportive parents ("Parents are respectful"; "A mother's gratitude inspired commitment"), others faced undue blame. S5 observed, "Parents solely depend on teachers… blame us if learners can't read," mirroring Miranda and Castillejo's (2020) findings on burnout from unrealistic expectations. Political interference further complicated this dynamic, as S6 noted: "Politicians side with voters over school policies," eroding institutional autonomy.

Role overload added to the strain. S7 described the burden of being a "role model," a demand by Pascual (2024) that linked to exhaustion without institutional support. These pressures, when unmet by resources or recognition, accelerated disillusionment.

Neutral or Accustomed Pressures

A minority, like S8, normalized stress due to familial legacy: "I came from a family of teachers… got used to it." Caballero and Villanueva (2023) attributed such resilience to cultural acclimatization, suggesting that inherited professional identities can buffer stress. However, this normalization risks perpetuating systemic neglect by masking underlying issues.

The themes of inadequate compensation and financial strain, insufficient benefits and financial instability, community expectations and social pressures, and neutral or accustomed pressures illuminated the multifaceted socioeconomic challenges influencing teachers' decisions to remain in or leave the Department of Education. These findings underscored that teacher attrition is not merely a matter of individual dissatisfaction but a systemic issue rooted in financial insecurity, insufficient institutional support, and socio-cultural expectations. Socio-economic realities—ranging from stagnant wages, limited access to benefits, and unstable career prospects—converge with community dynamics to create an environment where retention becomes unsustainable for many. Addressing these interconnected factors required holistic policy reforms that prioritized teacher welfare, professional dignity, and economic resilience to sustain a committed and effective educational workforce.

Philosophical Reasons for Leaving

Behind each teacher who departs the Department of Education is a tale not of defeat, but of bravery, introspection, and optimism. Their choice is frequently the product of years of silent struggle, profound commitment to their vocation, and an authentic wish to live a life that supports both their passion and their health. Listening to their insights allowed us to understand not just why they left, but what dreams and values they continue to carry forward. Beyond organizational burdens and socio-economic factors, participants revealed profoundly personal realization with identity, vocation, and dignity, one shared:

"Leaving DepEd was not abandonment, but an act of self-respect. I became a teacher because I thought that education held the power to transform lives — mine among them. But as time passed, I knew that while I gave my heart to the system, the system was never designed to hold the heart of those who work for it."

"I lingered for as long as I could, with hopes that weighed more than my paycheck, trading health, time, and occasionally even dignity.

I tried to tell myself that passion would suffice — but passion can't cure exhaustion, passion can't stock an empty table, and passion can't repair a soul that gradually loses its sense of self-worth. This sentiment was echoed by another teacher, who shared a similarly emotional realization."

"I chose to leave because I knew that fidelity to a failed system is not fidelity to my vocation. My vocation is to teach, to lead, to inspire — not to be suffocated by papers, politics, and broken promises -S3"

Moral Disengagement

Leaving DepEd was a decision to uphold one's dignity, defend one's purpose, and live a life free from passion that results in self-destruction. The teacher's awakening is a necessary act of bravery — a step toward mental repair and preservation — rather than an act of avoidance. Even though that decision is challenging, it gains strength and resonance.

"Leaving DepEd was not a career choice — it was a survival act. In a system that asks teachers to give without end and in return receives scant support, I watched my spirit chip away. Day by day, the fire that had driven me to teach gave way to silent exhaustion, then to something darker — anxiety, sleepless nights, and an increasing sense of powerlessness." -S5

Mental Health Reckoning

The deterioration of mental health as the primary cause of their resignation rather than as a side issue. Participants described hidden struggles with worry, burnout, and a mounting sense of emotional exhaustion—conditions that were frequently disregarded or accepted inside the system. As one teacher reflected:

"I stayed because I adored my students. But selfless love is a path to self-annihilation. No career, no vocation, should sacrifice an individual's peace of mind, well-being, or desire to live fully. Leaving was not deserting the cause of education. It was a decision to save the teacher who stood behind it."

"It was recognizing that mental health is not an extravagance — it is a cornerstone. And if I am broken, how can I mend others?" -S4, as Frontiers in Psychology (2022) discussed the causes of stress in teaching, the emotional toll, and the eventual decision to leave the profession as a means of self-preservation. Another echoed this realization, framing departure as an act of preservation, not surrender:

"Leaving was not about walking away from my mission; it was about choosing my health over burnout, protecting my peace, and finding space to breathe again. I realized that in order to continue giving, I first needed to heal."

"This was not a failure. It was a necessary step to preserve myself — to recover and rebuild so that I can serve with the same heart I had when I first began." S10

Teacher attrition, noting that departure is not an escape, but rather a deliberate choice to mend and preserve one's capacity to give meaningfully. It is not surrendering on a calling, but rather understanding the value of self-care in ensuring long-term effectiveness and emotional strength in the profession.

Organizational Injustice and Professional Disillusionment

When the leadership favors informal association over professional merit, it creates a toxic environment where teachers may feel both dejected and disconnected from the essence of mission of education. This system of favoritism not only fostered a sense of injustice but also eroded my motivation to remain in the profession. Many participants talked about how biased leadership practices and favoritism had a big impact on their professional identities and morale. They were dissatisfied, discouraged, and disengaged from their teaching role rather than feeling valued for their talent and commitment. One teacher stated:

"Even with my relentless commitment to the job, including working long hours and making personal sacrifices, my work seemed to go unnoticed. In my situation, the feeling that my hard work was not appreciated was further fueled by a work environment where personal favors, like offering food or social invitations to supervisors, seemed to carry more influence than the quality of work and professional contributions" S6.

The incompetence to see the essential worth of diligence, coupled with a culture where social connection outweighed merit, led to decline motivation and respect for the organization itself. This choice is a sign of more extensive problem of teacher retention since teachers who are not appreciated or aided are likely to leave, further aggravating the persistent issue of teacher turnover in schools

Teachers' intention to quit the Department of Education (DepEd) is not solely motivated by workload, burnout, awards, recognition, salaries, or the problems they encounter in the classroom. Although these certainly play a part in teacher turnover, a key and often neglected factor is the failure to recognize and appreciate teachers' hard work and devotion, and the inability to recognize their contributions appropriately. The lack of recognition and appreciation for their mental well-being has been a top priority. Teachers, who are the center of school systems, are not only overwhelmed by the physical aspects of the work but by emotional burnout, added to the perception that their work is not seen or appreciated.

According to a 2023 report by Education Support, nearly 70% of teachers report experiencing high levels of stress and burnout, with many attributing this to inadequate support and recognition from their schools and leadership (Education Support, 2023). Additionally,

studies from Hakanen et al. (2022) emphasized that unaddressed mental health issues among educators, exacerbated by ongoing work pressures and lack of sufficient recognition, can contribute to increased teacher attrition. Thus, teachers' mental health, the recognition of their hard work, and the value placed on their well-being are crucial factors influencing their decision to leave the profession.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following significant conclusions were drawn:

The multi-faceted factors influencing teacher attrition came in different aspects in terms of personal factors, professional factors, organizational factors, and socioeconomic factors. Among the most pressing issues were workload stress, low salaries, inadequate benefits, presence of financial insecurity, limited career advancement, inconsistent of lack of recognition, inadequate administrative support, and lack of resources.

Based on the occurrence of the foregoing aspects drawn from the four (4) general aspects: personal, professional, organizational, and socio-economic. It was formulated that financial security and pronounced benefits, for professional enhancement and recognition were reasons. Also, the just and reasonable workloads, the availability of resources and functional infrastructures bore strong importance on the teachers as they could be driven to leave their positions in the public schools or shift profession when these factors were not satisfying.

With the established information on the multi-faceted factors influencing teacher attrition, it is expected that there would be efforts to prevent teacher attrition and improve teacher retention in the Department of Education. This created a sustainable and supportive environment for the teachers in the public school in the Division of Iligan City.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were offered for consideration. Education officials advocate for increased funding to provide competitive salaries that match or exceed teachers' workload or industry standards; deliver wide-ranging benefit packages, including health insurance, financial assistance, and retirement plans; foster transparent and equitable promotion processes with clearly defined criteria and pathways; and provide regular access to professional development programs, workshops, and mentoring opportunities. School authorities or administrators devise workload management strategies, such as relegation of administrative tasks to support staff and utilizing technology to restructure processes and establish adaptable schedules and wellness initiatives to diminish burnout and enhance work-life balance. They also create consistent recognition programs to celebrate teacher achievements and contributions, such as monthly awards or public acknowledgments.

The school creates a platform to introduce performance-based incentives or allowances for teachers, especially those in underserved places; establish transparent and equitable promotion and develop open communication channels between teachers and administrators to ensure ongoing support and feedback; invest in improving school facilities, including classrooms, libraries, and technology; and ensure the availability of adequate teaching materials to support lesson planning and delivery. Strategies to assist educators and raise their level of job satisfaction be developed. The teachers cooperate with the efforts of the schools and the administrators in the implementation of programs and endeavors to meet their personal, professional, organizational, and socio-economic needs.

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