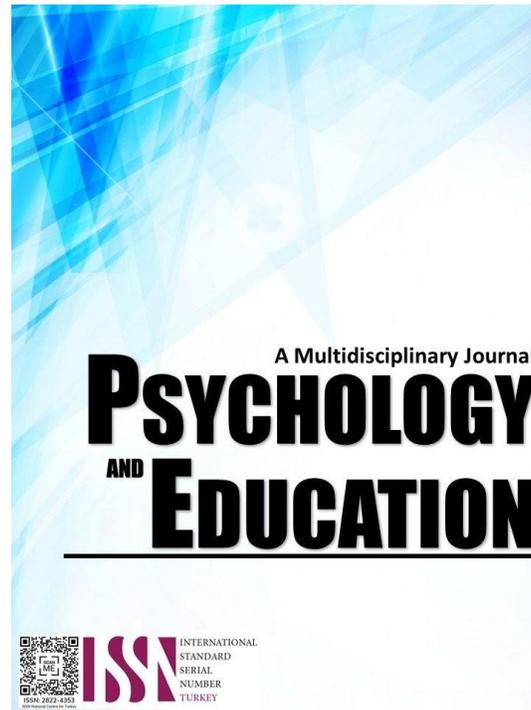


# **BEYOND SURVIVAL: EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES, COPING MECHANISMS, AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE OF FILIPINO TEACHERS IN U.S. SCHOOLS**



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## Beyond Survival: Emotional Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, and Cultural Resilience of Filipino Teachers in U.S. Schools

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### Abstract

This study delves into the day-to-day experiences of teachers from the Philippines working in U.S. middle schools during the first few months of their employment. The study focuses on emotional difficulties, coping methods, and cultural resilience. The data were gathered from a publicly accessible Facebook group called "J-1 Filipino Teachers in the United States," where teachers willingly contributed reflective stories. The research used a netnographic qualitative methodology. To create a collection of posts, a selection was made based on whether each posting was relevant to the teachers' challenges and coping mechanisms. Following a thematic analysis, five significant conclusions were reached which are: Filipino teachers frequently encounter cultural dissonance and high levels of emotional exhaustion; they depend on faith, community, and structured routines to help them cope; their motivation is maintained by family and financial objectives; institutional support is frequently inadequate; and there is a need for systemic improvements in the areas of mentorship, onboarding, and mental health care. To ensure international teachers are not only well-supported but also retained, these findings highlight the importance of establishing culturally appropriate, emotionally supportive policies. This study contributes to the ongoing discussion of adjustment processes for migrant teachers and emphasizes the importance of placing cultural identity at the heart of educational policy and practice.

**Keywords:** *Filipino J-1 teachers, cultural adjustment, emotional resilience, mentorship, institutional support*

### Introduction

Several Filipino teachers have been actively seeking employment opportunities abroad, and a significant number have been successful in obtaining positions at a variety of Basic Education institutions worldwide, with the United States of America being a particularly popular destination (Bustos, 2024). For many people, a career as a teacher serves as a stepping stone toward the so-called American Dream (Nguyen & Tian, 2025). It provides them with the opportunity to earn higher salaries, enabling them to support their families back in the Philippines. Migration for the sake of employment has evolved from a mere financial tactic into a means of advancing one's career, engaging in cultural exchange, and undergoing personal transformation (Yi-Neumann, 2025).

According to a study across a range of developing contexts, including Africa, education professionals frequently relocate to other nations due to poor compensation and limited professional advancement opportunities in their countries of origin (Mohamed et al., 2024). The experiences of Filipino educators align with this pattern. In their phenomenological study, Tantay et al. (2024) found that many Filipino teachers identified higher salaries, family reunification, and professional development opportunities as the key reasons for their decision to migrate to another country. In their study, Lopez and Paglinawan (2025) drew attention to the fact that even teachers who occupy positions of high rank within the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines are willing to leave their stable careers in exchange for opportunities to work abroad that offer not only higher compensation but also a more structured career progression path. The movement of teachers, while advantageous for individuals, has raised strategic policy issues in regions that send teachers elsewhere, where education systems are now experiencing a worker shortage, as revealed by Soriano et al. (2024).

In addition, Filipino teachers working outside the Philippines have seen improvements in their financial situations and pedagogical practices (Valenzuela et al., 2025). Many of them claimed to have gained intercultural competency, learned modern instructional methodologies, and made considerable improvements in their English language proficiency (Whitaker, 2025; Dumdum, 2020). Dumdum (2020) investigated the experiences of migrant teachers in Arizona and found that teachers who were new to the field but had experience working abroad could rebrand professionally, thereby expanding their self-efficacy and global employability. Nevertheless, the emotional and social costs associated with this professional advancement cannot be ignored. Long-term family separation, cultural adaptations, and feelings of isolation are commonly experienced by teachers who migrate (Aranda, 2023; Uytico & Abadiano, 2020). There is a possibility that teachers would encounter the paradox of personal fulfillment overseas while at the same time feeling disconnected from the people they care about back in the Philippines (Si, 2023).

The motives and advantages of Filipino teachers migrating to other countries, such as improved compensation and opportunities for professional development, are highlighted in existing research. However, few studies focus on the specific problems Filipino teachers encounter when working in other countries and how they deal with those challenges. Although topics such as family separation and cultural adaptation are frequently raised, they are not examined in depth. To better support migrant educators, there is a need for a focused inquiry into the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives and the coping mechanisms they employ.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of Filipino teachers during their initial months of teaching in schools in the United States. It seeks to understand the difficulties they encounter in adjusting to their new professional and personal environments

and to examine the strategies they employ to adapt. The findings aim to provide valuable insights into supporting migrant teachers' overall well-being and to guide institutions in facilitating their smooth transition and professional success.

## Research Questions

In order to address the above-stated purpose, this study sought to address the following questions, viz:

1. What common emotional and psychological challenges are expressed by Filipino teachers during their initial months of teaching in U.S. schools?
2. How do Filipino teachers describe the influence of their faith and spiritual practices in coping with burnout, stress, and homesickness?
3. In what ways do family relationships and shared goals (e.g., financial stability, children's future) influence their decision to stay or persevere despite difficulties?
4. What practical self-care strategies and boundaries do teachers employ to maintain mental wellness amid overwhelming workloads?
5. How does community support—especially from fellow Filipino educators—contribute to emotional survival and resilience?

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore and interpret participants' lived experiences, viewpoints, and contextual realities. The researchers sought to cultivate a profound understanding rather than numerical generalizations, focusing on meanings, patterns, and themes that emerged from participants' narratives (Ellis & Hart, 2023). Specifically, a netnographic approach was adopted to examine the lived experiences of Filipino teachers in U.S. middle schools (Abutaleb et al., 2021). Netnography, developed by Kozinets (2010), is an adaptation of ethnography for online communities and is particularly effective in analyzing naturally occurring discussions and user-generated content (Podoshen et al., 2023). Unlike traditional ethnography, which requires face-to-face immersion, netnography allows researchers to observe cultural expressions and interactions in real time within digital environments (Ünsay, 2025).

### Data Source

The data for this study were drawn from a public Facebook group titled "J-1 Filipino Teachers in the US," an openly accessible online community where Filipino educators share their personal experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms related to teaching in the United States. Over the course of a month, the researchers conducted passive observation and systematically documented posts that aligned with the study's objectives. A total of twenty posts were purposively selected based on specific criteria: they had to be reflective in nature, authored by Filipino teachers currently teaching in the U.S. under a J-1 visa or similar program, explicitly mention experiences such as emotional distress, burnout, culture shock, faith-based coping, family motivation, or perceived support, and be written in a tone that conveyed lived experience rather than hypothetical scenarios. Brief posts, lacked context, or were unrelated to personal teaching and adjustment experiences were excluded. The selected posts provided rich, authentic insights into how Filipino teachers navigate emotional and professional challenges in transnational contexts. Most participants appeared to be in their first to fifth year of teaching abroad, often under J-1 visa programs, and contextual cues suggested that many were married or had families, motivated by financial goals, religious beliefs, and aspirations for their children's future.

### Instrument

Given the netnographic design of this study, no formal research instrument was employed. The researchers relied on naturally occurring online posts authored by Filipino teachers, which functioned as qualitative narratives of lived experiences. This approach aligns with the naturalistic orientation of netnography, where data emerge organically rather than through structured tools. To maintain rigor, purposive sampling was applied to ensure that the selected posts were reflective and context-rich. The authenticity of the accounts was preserved by analyzing spontaneous expressions, allowing access to personal reflections that might not have surfaced in more conventional methods such as surveys or interviews.

### Procedure

The research procedure followed a straightforward step-by-step netnographic process. First, the researchers immersed in the Facebook group through passive observation for one month. Second, posts were systematically documented and screened against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Third, twenty reflective posts were selected for analysis. Fourth, significant statements and sentiments were identified and coded. Fifth, codes were clustered to form emerging themes. Sixth, themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and distinctiveness. Lastly, the findings were organized into a narrative account supported by direct quotes from participants.

### Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis method, as cited by Dawson et al. (2024). The researchers began by familiarizing themselves with the data through repeated readings of the posts. Initial codes were then generated by identifying significant statements and sentiments. These codes were clustered to search for emerging themes that captured

the core issues expressed by the teachers. Once themes were identified, they were reviewed for coherence and refined to ensure clarity and distinctiveness. Each theme was then defined and named, with direct quotes used to support the analysis. The final phase involved producing a narrative account of the findings, organized around the central themes derived from the data.

### Ethical Considerations

Although the Facebook group was public and its content openly accessible, the study adhered to ethical research practices (Boveda et al., 2023). All identifiable information, such as names, profile images, and links, was removed to protect participants' privacy, and posts were treated with cultural and emotional sensitivity. The Facebook group was informed of the intended study, with a clear statement that the data would be anonymized, purely observational, and involve no interaction with participants. In line with this, the researchers avoided direct engagement with group members to respect their digital space. This approach safeguarded participants' privacy while allowing access to authentic reflections that might not have been captured in structured interviews or surveys (Gerdes, 2022; Medrado & Filho, 2023).

### Results and Discussion

Table 1. *Emotional and Psychological Challenges Experienced during the Initial Teaching Months*

<i>Emerging Themes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Sample Quotes</i>
Burnout and Emotional Exhaustion	Teachers reported extreme fatigue from overwork, lack of rest, and constant lesson planning.	J1T-1: "I'm not getting enough sleep or rest because I have to prepare lessons every night."
Culture Shock	Disorientation from adjusting to U.S. school systems, classroom expectations, and norms.	J1T-1: "The students here are not focused or respectful... this is nothing like what I taught in the Philippines." J1T-4: "Grabe ang behavior ng mga bata... nakakamatay na konsumosyon talaga araw-araw." (The behavior of the students is overwhelming... it's mentally and emotionally draining every day.)
Classroom Management Difficulties	Middle school behavior was cited as drastically different and more difficult than expected.	J1T-8: "I feel so alone here. I miss my family and I don't have anyone to talk to who understands."
Isolation and Homesickness	Teachers felt emotionally distant, missed family, and lacked immediate support systems.	J1T-1: "This is only my fifth day of teaching and I already feel like I can't survive for long."
Self-Doubt and Anxiety	Feelings of inadequacy and fear of failure were common in the early months.	

Table 1 outlines the emotional and psychological difficulties Filipino educators encounter during their initial months of teaching in U.S. schools. The identified themes encompass burnout and emotional exhaustion, cultural shock, challenges in classroom management, isolation and homesickness, as well as self-doubt or anxiety. Educators reported experiencing insomnia, emotional exhaustion, and persistent stress due to lesson preparation and behavioral challenges in the classroom. As J1T-1 remarked, "This is only my fifth day of teaching, and I'm already feeling like I can't survive for long. I'm an ELA teacher in a middle school, and the students are not focused or interested in learning during my lessons. I'm considering resigning as early as this week to avoid burnout and developing anxiety. I'm not getting enough sleep or rest because I have to prepare lessons every night." Such statements illustrate how the burden of adjustment rapidly overwhelms newcomers, prompting some to contemplate quitting even within the initial week.

The stark disparity between their previous teaching experiences in the Philippines and the realities of U.S. middle schools has further exacerbated feelings of confusion. J1T-3 further remarked, "Hello to all the newcomers! I want to acknowledge the students in the US who may be quite different from those in the Philippines... I understand the challenges of adapting to the students here, and I encourage you not to give up." This exemplifies the culture shock induced by disparities in student conduct, educational culture, and expectations, frequently resulting in self-doubt and worry. J1T-1 acknowledged, "Perhaps I lack classroom management skills or am not used to teaching this age group, since my experience has been with senior high and college level students."

Emotions of solitude and homesickness were equally prevalent. Although teachers are inspired by their families, the emotional strain is apparent. J1T-2 expressed, "I am tired but of course, I can't go home even if I wanted to do! I am doing this for my family. I am really praying I can survive until my fifth year!" J1T-4 stated that emotional disputes with colleagues had rendered them disheartened, saying, "Hindi ako makapaniwala mga bess na may mga taong sobrang irrational but in the end, I made peace with myself knowing that if a person chose to misunderstand you, it will be like talking to a wall."

These problems highlight the pressing necessity for specialized institutional assistance for newly arrived overseas educators. Orientation sessions should encompass not just administrative processes but also training in culturally responsive classroom management and authentic anticipations of student conduct in high-need schools. Mentorship programs, particularly those facilitated by culturally analogous or seasoned peers, might serve as a safeguard against premature burnout and emotional isolation. In the absence



of such support, novice educators may endure hardships in silence or exit the field prematurely, jeopardizing both institutional stability and the individual's aspirations for migration.

Current research corroborates these conclusions. Balčytienė (2025) explains the cultural and professional dissonance encountered by migrant teachers in unfamiliar educational institutions, frequently resulting in identity conflict and burnout. Manik and Maharaj (2020) highlight the psychological burden of teaching in underprivileged settings lacking sufficient preparation and support (Ramzan et al., 2025). Baez (2025) asserts that teachers abroad in the Filipino setting bear extra emotional burdens associated with familial expectations and financial sacrifices, rendering early-stage support a moral and practical necessity. The educators' accounts in this study corroborate these trends, while emphasizing the profound human challenges that statistics and generic descriptions frequently neglect.

Table 2. *Coping Mechanisms Employed to Manage Stress and Prevent Burnout*

<i>Emerging Themes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Sample Quotes</i>
Faith-Based Coping	Teachers rely heavily on prayer, Bible reading, and spiritual surrender to cope with stress.	J1T-11: “Iniyak na po namin kay Lord lahat... Hinayaan na po namin si Lord ang maging driver ng buhay namin.” (We have cried everything out to the Lord... We have let Him take the driver’s seat of our lives.)
Time-Bound Work Routines	Teachers implement cut-off times for work to preserve their mental health and physical energy.	J1T-12: “Pagpatak ng 9pm, drop everything... kahit hindi pa kami tapos.” (When the clock strikes 9 p.m., we drop everything... even if we’re not yet done.)
Self-Care Practices	Small rituals like relaxing on weekends, spending quality time with family, or treating oneself help recharge energy.	J1T-13: “Simpleng kain sa labas, nuod ng Netflix... kailangan din po namin ng relaxation.” (A simple meal out, watching Netflix... we also need relaxation.)
Delayed Gratification & Goal Setting	Teachers use dream boards and future financial goals to stay motivated despite day-to-day hardships.	J1T-14: “May dream board kami... para ma-remind kami ng goals namin despite the stress.” (We have a dream board... to remind ourselves of our goals despite the stress.)
Community-Based Coping	Being part of Filipino groups and sharing with fellow teachers reduces feelings of isolation and provides emotional relief.	J1T-15: “Join Filipino groups para may makausap kayo at mashare ang situation niyo.” (Join Filipino groups so you’ll have people to talk to and share your situation with.)

Table 2 presents the coping strategies Filipino teachers use to mitigate stress and avert burnout during their adaptation to U.S. educational institutions. The study identified five principal themes: faith-oriented coping, time-constrained job patterns, self-care methodologies, deferred pleasure through goal-setting, and community-oriented support. Teachers frequently relied on prayer, scripture reading, and spiritual submission as means of emotional equilibrium. J1T-7 stated, “to combat homesickness, I engage in prayer groups, convene with fellow Filipino teachers and friends, prepare Filipino cuisine, and organize gatherings.” These experiences demonstrate how faith and communal spiritual practices provide solace and connection. Another story by J1T-2 highlighted perseverance via spiritual dependence saying, “I am undertaking this for my family. I fervently hope to last till my fifth year.”

Structured routines, including the establishment of work time limitations, were deemed crucial for mental preservation. A stated again by J1T-7, “possessing an open mind and a willingness to learn effective classroom management strategies, dedicating additional time to content acquisition through research and participation in workshops, and engaging in professional development.” This demonstrates a deliberate attempt to harmonize career advancement with effective time management. Teachers emphasized the importance of minor self-care practices, such as dining out, watching television, or dedicating time to personal interests. J1T-7 further emphasized the need of “budgeting and exercising delayed gratification, automating bills and savings to allocate funds for travel and leisure activities during weekends and holidays.” This demonstrates that even modest self-reward systems offer psychological respite while encouraging long-term objectives.

Community-based assistance also played a vital role in sustaining resilience. Filipino teachers, as expressed mainly by J1T-7 characterized “carpooling and consistent communication with family at home” as uncomplicated yet influential methods for alleviating stress and maintaining motivation. It is further emphasized that the significance of cultural connection, stating, “convening with fellow Filipino teachers and friends, preparing Filipino cuisine, and socializing,” illustrating how culinary experiences and communal activities serve as pathways for belonging and emotional healing.

The findings indicate that Filipino teachers cultivate individualized, culturally based ways to sustain emotional stability in the absence of institutional support systems. Their capacity to establish boundaries and participate in restorative practices illustrates resilience, but simultaneously highlighting the personal burden of emotional self-regulation. Institutional policies ought to integrate teacher wellness initiatives that affirm and bolster these coping mechanisms. Schools might establish designated wellness hours, promote community circles, and cultivate cultures where rest and reflection are not merely permitted but actively encouraged. Furthermore, promoting culturally significant coping mechanisms—such as dream boards, prayer groups, or food-sharing circles—can enhance psychological safety for international educators.



Studies in international education emphasize the significance of culturally aligned coping strategies. Batuwanthudawa and Udayanga (2025) emphasize the protective role of spirituality and religion in the welfare of immigrant populations. Likewise, Ntumi et al. (2025) found that educators with healthy personal and cultural identities are more likely to maintain resilience in high-stress settings. The collectivist coping mechanism prevalent in Filipino culture—characterized by the interconnection of family, community, and faith—serves not only as a means of survival but also as a crucial support for maintaining mental health and professional dedication within foreign educational frameworks.

Table 3. *Cultural Values Influencing Resilience and Adaptation*

<i>Emerging Themes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Sample Quotes</i>
Family-Oriented Motivation	Teachers draw strength from their responsibilities to their spouse, children, or parents, seeing their sacrifices as worthwhile for long-term goals.	J1T-16: “Focus kami sa goal... para sa kinabukasan ng pamilya namin sa Pinas.” (We stay focused on our goal... for the future of our family in the Philippines.)
Financial Aspirations	Desire to save money, invest in property, or build a future back home fuels teachers to endure challenges.	J1T-17: “Mag-ipon, mag-invest... yan ang goal namin. Kaya tiis kahit mahirap.” (Save and invest... that’s our goal. We endure even when it’s hard.)
Spiritual Resilience	Faith in God and a sense of divine purpose help teachers find meaning in their struggles and keep going.	J1T-18: “Si Lord ang nagbibigay ng lakas... isinuko na namin lahat sa Kanya.” (The Lord gives us strength... we have surrendered everything to Him.)
Cultural Identity and Sacrifice	Teachers perceive hardship as part of the Filipino migrant narrative—where struggle now means prosperity later.	J1T-19: “Proses lang ito... pare-pareho lang tayong lahat. Magtiis lang.” (This is just a process... we’re all going through the same thing. Just keep enduring.)

Table 3 displays the cultural values that influence the resilience and adaptation of Filipino educators inside the U.S. education system. The prevailing themes encompass familial motivation, financial ambitions, spiritual fortitude, and cultural myths of sacrifice. Educators draw emotional and psychological resilience from their obligations to their spouses, children, and extended families. J1T-2 stated, “I am fatigued; however, I cannot leave, even if I wished to do so. I am undertaking this for my family.” I fervently hope to last till my fifth year. The aspiration to attain a superior future and offer enduring assistance sustains them despite fatigue and adversity.

Financial objectives, such as real estate investment or saving for children's education, serve as powerful motivators that help instructors withstand the daily hardships of relocation and professional obligations. As J1T-16 explained, “budgeting and exercising delayed gratification, automating bills and savings to allocate funds for travel and recreational activities on weekends and holidays.” This demonstrates a proactive perspective in which present sacrifices are linked to future familial security.

Faith and spirituality enhance resilience. Educators articulated that they relied on prayer and community as stabilizing forces during periods of homesickness, where J1T-7 stated “for homesickness~ participating in prayer groups, convening with fellow Filipino teachers and friends, preparing Filipino cuisine, and social gatherings.” Another stated, “I am fervently praying for survival...” highlighting how prayer and submission facilitate the transformation of adversity into a manageable experience.

These culturally rooted values function as both motivators and cognitive frameworks that convert misery into meaning. Educators perceive adversity as an essential stage along a broader trajectory toward advancement, reflecting a shared Filipino conviction that difficulty precedes achievement. J1T-4 contemplated resilience in the face of conflict saying, “I cannot believe that there are individuals who are exceedingly irrational... yet ultimately, I found solace in the understanding that if someone opts to misconstrue you, it is akin to conversing with a wall.” This illustrates how cultural tales of endurance and sacrifice contextualize adversity as an aspect of moral obligation and perseverance. This view allows schools to acknowledge the profound personal stories that numerous international instructors possess, which influence both their work ethic and emotional landscape. Policies and professional development initiatives can enhance their effectiveness by aligning with these ideals to foster cultures that support resilience rather than exploit it.

This pattern corresponds with scholarly work on transnational Filipino labor and migrant identity. Hyun (2025) clarifies that transnational Filipino workers frequently perceive adversity through the prism of familial obligation and spiritual significance. Similarly, Garcia (2024) characterizes Filipino migration as a gendered and moral sacrifice, grounded in collectivist principles. Hamaniuk et al. (2025) assert that educators' resilience is closely linked to their identity and moral purpose, both of which are influenced by cultural background. Acknowledging and valuing these cultural foundations enables institutions to more effectively assist migrant educators in sustaining both their professional efficacy and overall well-being.

Table 4. *Forms of Support Perceived to be Helpful or Lacking*

<i>Emerging Themes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Sample Quotes</i>
Peer Support from Fellow Filipino Teachers	Teachers found emotional validation, encouragement, and practical advice from fellow Filipino educators.	J1T-20: “Kausap mo lang yung kapwa mo Pinoy teacher, gumagaan na agad pakiramdam mo.” (Just talking to a fellow Filipino teacher immediately lightens how you feel.)
Community and Group Belonging	Being part of Filipino church groups or support circles helped combat isolation and homesickness.	J1T-15: “Sumali kami sa Bible study at Filipino group, malaking bagay na may kausap ka na kapwa mo.” (We joined a Bible study and Filipino group; it



Lack of Institutional or Administrative Support	Teachers reported minimal guidance or mentorship from their schools during the transition period.	really helps to have someone who understands you.) JIT-9: “Walang masyadong orientation o mentor... parang bahala ka na agad sa classroom.” (There wasn’t much orientation or mentoring... it’s like you’re left on your own right away in the classroom.)
Need for Mental Health Awareness	Emotional needs were largely unacknowledged by institutions, and teachers were left to manage alone.	JIT-10: “Hindi nila alam yung pinagdadaanan namin emotionally... basta trabaho lang nang trabaho.” (They don’t understand what we’re going through emotionally... it’s just work after work.)

Table 4 reveals the types of support that Filipino teachers consider beneficial or deficient in their transition to teaching in U.S. schools. The emerging themes encompass peer support among Filipino educators, a sense of community belonging, insufficient institutional direction, and a lack of recognition for mental health issues. Educators underscored the need to converse with individuals who share their cultural and professional backgrounds, characterizing these ties as emotionally stabilizing. JIT-7 remarked, “to alleviate homesickness, one can join prayer groups, convene with fellow Filipino educators and friends, prepare Filipino cuisine, and organize gatherings.” These informal social networks and spiritual communities served as vital sources of encouragement, mitigating isolation. JIT-7 added that “carpooling and consistent communication with family at home” provided both practical and emotional stability in the absence of systemic support.

Engagement in Bible studies, prayer groups, and Filipino community events proved to be essential coping mechanisms. JIT-2 said, “I am undertaking this for my family.” I fervently hope to last till my fifth year. Such expressions underscore how communal religion and common ideals bolstered resilience. The lack of organized administrative support left numerous teachers feeling confused and neglected during their initial months. JIT-1 remarked, “I may lack classroom management skills or experience with this age group, as my background has primarily been with senior high and college students.” This self-blame was not solely a personal uncertainty but a manifestation of inadequate institutional preparedness and guidance. JIT-1 stated, “This is merely my fifth day of teaching, and I already feel as though I cannot endure much longer... I am contemplating retiring as soon as this week to prevent fatigue and the onset of worry.” Such observations highlight how insufficient direction can exacerbate vulnerability, leaving educators unsupported among cultural disorientation and behavioral difficulties.

The gap was particularly detrimental as the emotional burden of cultural adaptation and classroom management frequently went unnoticed by school officials. The absence of mental health knowledge in institutions fostered an environment where emotional distress remained unrecognized, and educators were expected to persevere without systematic assistance. The results emphasize the necessity for cohesive support structures that amalgamate professional, emotional, and cultural responsiveness for migrant educators.

A study on teacher migration consistently finds that peer and community support often surpasses formal programs in promoting emotional well-being (Chen, 2025). Behera et al. (2025) found that emotional affirmation from cultural peers markedly reduced stress among novice foreign educators. Nonetheless, this does not diminish the institutional obligation to offer formal mentorship, onboarding, and emotional support. Stein et al. (2024) contend that culturally responsive education should encompass not only classroom practices but also staff development and wellness programs. Schools must transition from perceiving support as optional to acknowledging it as an essential structural component, especially when interacting with vulnerable international labor groups.

Table 5. Implications For Support Systems for International Educators

Emerging Themes	Description	Sample Quotes
Need for Culturally Sensitive Mentorship	Teachers need mentors who understand their cultural background and emotional journey.	JIT-15: “Kung may mentor lang sana na Pinoy o kahit marunong umintindi sa pinagdadaanan namin...” (If only there were a Filipino mentor or at least someone who understands what we are going through...)
Mental Health and Wellness Support	Schools should address emotional well-being and recognize the emotional toll of migration and adaptation.	JIT-10: “Sana may support system para sa mental health... hindi lang puro trabaho.” (I hope there’s a support system for mental health... not just constant work.)
Holistic and Structured Onboarding	Educators benefit from thorough orientations, especially regarding behavioral expectations and school systems.	JIT-9: “Kung na-orient lang sana kami nang maayos sa system dito, mas hindi kami nagulat.” (If only we had been properly oriented to the system here, we wouldn’t have been so overwhelmed.)
Recognition of Emotional Labor	Institutions must acknowledge that migrant teachers carry emotional burdens beyond teaching tasks.	JIT-19: “Hindi lang basta teacher kami, may bitbit kaming pamilya, lungkot, at takot.” (We are not just teachers; we carry with us our families, our sadness, and our fears.)

Table 5 presents the key implications for improving support systems for international educators, specifically derived from the experiences of Filipino J-1 teachers in U.S. schools. The emerging themes include the need for culturally sensitive mentorship, mental health and wellness support, holistic onboarding processes, and institutional recognition of emotional labor.

Teachers consistently voiced a desire for mentors who not only understand pedagogy but also empathize with their cultural background and emotional challenges. As J1T-1 admitted, “Perhaps I lack classroom management skills or am not used to teaching this age group, since my experience has been with senior high and college level students,” while J1T-15 added, “Kung may mentor lang sana na Pinoy o kahit marunong umintindi sa pinagdadaanan namin...” (“If only there were a Filipino mentor or at least someone who understands what we are going through...”) These reflections show how culturally attuned mentorship could have eased the burden of adaptation.

Equally important was the need for schools to formally acknowledge the emotional and psychological toll of migration and adjustment. As J1T-1 shared, “This is only my fifth day of teaching, and I'm already feeling like I can't survive for long... I'm considering resigning as early as this week to avoid burnout and developing anxiety.” Similarly, J1T-10 longed for systemic acknowledgment, saying, “Sana may support system para sa mental health... hindi lang puro trabaho.” (“I hope there’s a support system for mental health... not just constant work.”) Such statements highlight the necessity of wellness structures that validate teachers’ emotional struggles.

Teachers also identified a lack of structured onboarding as a serious gap. J1T-9 observed, “Kung na-orient lang sana kami nang maayos sa system dito, mas hindi kami nagulat,” (“If only we had been properly oriented to the system here, we wouldn’t have been so overwhelmed.”) while J1T-3 reflected, “Hello to all the newcomers! I want to acknowledge the students in the US who may be quite different from those in the Philippines... adapting to the students here is really a challenge.” These accounts reveal how disorientation in the absence of preparation heightened stress and self-doubt.

Furthermore, teachers emphasized that the emotional labor they carry is multi-layered. As J1T-2 stated, “I am tired but of course, I can’t go home even if I wanted to! I am doing this for my family. I am really praying I can survive until my fifth year!” Likewise, J1T-19 explained, “Hindi lang basta teacher kami, may bitbit kaming pamilya, lungkot, at takot.” (“We are not just teachers; we carry with us our families, our sadness, and our fears.”) These voices accentuate that the teaching role for migrant educators cannot be separated from the personal and familial sacrifices they shoulder.

This aligns with literature calling for culturally informed and emotionally attuned support frameworks for migrant teachers. Li (2025) argues that mentorship must be adapted to meet the diverse needs of international teachers, incorporating cultural orientation alongside instructional coaching. Selebano et al. (2025) stress the importance of workplace well-being in teacher effectiveness and retention, particularly in high-stress environments. Additionally, Crew (2025) highlights the emotional cost of teaching, especially for those working in unfamiliar cultural contexts. Acknowledging and institutionalizing these supports is not only ethically sound but essential to building sustainable, diverse, and resilient school systems.

## Conclusions

This study concludes that Filipino teachers in U.S. schools experience considerable emotional and professional challenges during their initial adjustment, particularly relating to burnout, cultural dissonance, and limited institutional support. Despite these difficulties, their resilience is rooted in faith, family-centered motivation, and strong communal coping practices, which serve as vital sources of strength. The findings underscore the need for culturally responsive mentorship, accessible mental health initiatives, and comprehensive onboarding programs that address both pedagogical and emotional adaptation. Anchoring institutional policies and support structures in these lived experiences will enable educational systems to move beyond basic survival assistance, fostering environments where Filipino migrant educators—and by extension, all international teachers—can achieve genuine growth, stability, and professional fulfillment.

Grounded on the study’s significant findings, it is recommended that educational institutions strengthen support systems for Filipino J-1 teachers through data-driven interventions. The teachers’ experiences revealed the need for culturally responsive mentorship to address challenges in classroom management and cultural adjustment, as well as accessible mental health and wellness programs to alleviate emotional exhaustion and prevent burnout. The absence of adequate preparation underscores the importance of comprehensive onboarding and orientation that integrate behavioral expectations, classroom strategies, and cultural acclimation. Moreover, recognizing the emotional labor and familial sacrifices of migrant educators is vital; thus, school leaders must foster inclusive, empathetic, and community-oriented environments that promote dialogue, collaboration, and well-being to enhance teacher retention and professional fulfillment.

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