

Original Article

From Home to Host Country: A Phenomenological Study on the Work-Life Balance and Human Flourishing of Migrant Filipino Teachers

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Abstract. This study explored the lived experiences of migrant Filipino teachers through the lens of work-life balance and human flourishing. It aimed to understand how these concepts were experienced, defined, and related in the participants' accounts. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, nine (9) teachers who had previously worked in the Philippines and were currently teaching abroad were selected and interviewed. Their responses were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework within an interpretive phenomenological orientation. The findings suggest that, within this sample, migration reconfigured the teachers' everyday lives, with many participants describing more manageable work demands, clearer boundaries, and improved work-life balance. However, some participants also associated migration with a sense of quiet loneliness and the emotional strain of being away from familiar relationships and support systems. The teachers defined human flourishing as thriving as a person and as a teacher, often in terms of personal growth, well-being, purpose, and impact. Participants also described human flourishing as related to work-life balance, with balance often creating space for thriving. At the same time, a few participants interpreted difficult or imbalanced experiences as still contributing to growth, depending on their understanding. Overall, the study suggests that migration is more than an economic decision; for these participants, it was a complex process involving both relief and trade-offs in pursuit of a better quality of life. The findings offer evidence-informed implications for reducing excessive teacher workload, protecting time boundaries, strengthening psychosocial support for migrant teachers, and supporting teachers' personal and professional growth.

Keywords: Migration; Filipino teachers; Work-life balance; Human flourishing.

Bilang guro na nagtuturo sa ibang bansa, mas nararamdaman ko ang kasiyahan sa trabaho dahil mayroon na akong oras para sa aking sarili. Bukod dito, maayos din ang pasahod at ang tungkulin ko bilang guro ay nakatuon lamang talaga sa pagtuturo." ["As a teacher who is teaching in another country, I feel happier in my work because I now have time for myself. In addition, the pay is better, and my role as a teacher is truly focused on teaching."] This statement, from a teacher who left her position in the Philippines to teach abroad, illustrates a common motivation for Filipino teachers to migrate: the pursuit of a better life for themselves and their families. However, beyond these aspirations, a more profound question emerges: what does migration truly signify for Filipino teachers?

Teacher migration constitutes a well-documented phenomenon within the contemporary global context. It serves as a pragmatic response to international shortages in the educational workforce. Imbalances between supply and demand principally drive this pattern. According to the OECD (2020), numerous high-income nations increasingly recruit foreign educators to address persistent staffing deficits. UNESCO's 2024 report anticipates a global shortfall of approximately 44 million teachers by 2030. These prevailing conditions have expanded employment prospects for Filipino teachers, given the Philippines' established role as a significant exporter of educators. Data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) reflect an annual average of 1,500 teacher deployments (Real, 2024), underscoring the nation's critical contribution to international education systems.

Migration has become an intrinsic feature of Filipino society due to multifaceted reasons. The choice to emigrate frequently arises from a constellation of push and pull factors. Documented push factors for Filipino teachers include inadequate remuneration, economic adversity, occupational burnout, suboptimal working conditions, excessive workloads, and restricted opportunities for professional advancement (Boy & Ngag Jr., 2025). Boy and Ngag Jr. (2025) note that Filipino teachers are drawn to higher salaries, improved work environments, and better opportunities for professional advancement. Other studies likewise point to improved teaching conditions, access to resources, and professional respect as important pull factors in migration (Dumaguin et al., 2025; Oca & Malaga, 2025).

While push-and-pull dynamics render migration a rational choice, it is accompanied by significant trade-offs: teachers may face family separation (Magsigay, 2025), experiences of homesickness (Real & Flordeliz, 2024), isolation and identity negotiation, and challenges related to adaptation (Dannhauser & Seyama-Mokhaneli, 2025). Despite the economic advantages for recruiters and educators alike, migration remains a fundamentally human endeavor that transforms teachers' daily experiences and influences their well-being, perspectives, and sense of purpose (Oca & Malaga, 2025). Furthermore, migration entails transitioning between educational institutions, which not only serve as workplaces but also significantly shape teachers' sense of meaning, well-being, and potential for flourishing.

This study interrogates two principal constructs: work-life balance and human flourishing. Work-life balance (WLB) refers to the integration of occupational and non-occupational responsibilities in line with individual priorities, thereby fostering personal development (Gagnano et al., 2020). For educators, this necessitates managing professional obligations alongside personal roles to achieve rest and fulfillment, though conceptualizations of balance may vary. The migratory process further complicates these dynamics by altering established routines and relationships.

The second construct under examination is human flourishing (HF), conceptualized as optimal functioning and well-being across multiple dimensions of life (Logan, 2023). Flourishing may be achieved professionally through engagement in meaningful work, ongoing personal growth, and positive organizational cultures, or personally through physical health, social relationships, and subjective well-being. Migration exposes teachers to novel experiences with students, colleagues, cultural milieus, and work-life intersections. Many educators view migration as a deliberate pathway toward enhanced well-being for themselves and their dependents. Analyzing migration through the perspective of flourishing yields nuanced insights into teachers' motivations and decision-making processes.

Although work-life balance and human flourishing are conceptually distinct, they may still be meaningfully related. One useful way to understand this relationship is through Self-Determination Theory, which suggests that human well-being and growth are shaped by the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In this sense, work-life balance may be viewed as one of the conditions that can support or constrain broader thriving, while flourishing points to a wider experience of well-being, growth, meaning, and purpose. Empirical studies have likewise linked work-life balance with broader forms of well-being, including subjective well-being through need fulfillment (Gröpel & Kuhl, 2009) and eudaimonic well-being in the education sector (Soni & Bakhrui, 2019). In the context of migrant Filipino teachers, this relationship may be especially complex, since migration can improve some life conditions while also creating emotional and relational challenges. This makes their relationship especially worthy of examination in the context of migrant Filipino teachers, whose lives are marked by both occupational and personal transitions.

Most research on migrant teachers focuses on economic benefits, adjustment, and social costs. Less attention is

paid to how teachers interpret these experiences of work-life balance and flourishing, especially among migrant Filipino teachers who describe them across home and host countries. This research examines these aspects beyond the economic realm. It offers a phenomenological account of how migrant Filipino teachers describe and articulate their struggles, losses, gains, and life changes before and after migration. The paper’s novelty lies in making the WLB–HF connection explicit through participants’ lived meanings, rather than treating flourishing solely as a secondary outcome of migration. This contributes to broader local and international discussions on teacher mobility, highlighting that retention, well-being, and professional sustainability are shaped by organizational conditions and personal trade-offs, rather than solely by policy.

Accordingly, this study seeks to elucidate how migrant Filipino teachers experience and articulate work-life balance within both their origin and destination contexts, to identify and interpret the meanings ascribed to this balance or its absence, and to explore the relationship between these experiences and their perceptions of flourishing. Specifically, it aims to: (1) assess how migrant Filipino teachers’ work-life balance changed as a result of migration; (2) investigate how these educators define human flourishing in their lived experiences; and (3) examine their characterizations of the relationship between work-life balance and human flourishing across cultural contexts.

Methodology

Research Design

This investigation adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design to capture the lived experiences of migrant Filipino teachers. The focus encompassed their experiences preceding and following migration, with particular attention to work-life balance and perceptions of human flourishing. The study utilized an interpretive phenomenological framework. As elucidated by Neubauer (2019), interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology extends beyond mere description to include the interpretation of phenomena through the lens of the individual’s lifeworld. In this tradition, the researcher’s prior knowledge, experiences, assumptions, and beliefs are not dismissed as biases to be eliminated, but rather are integrated into the interpretive process, provided these influences are transparently acknowledged and critically examined.

Within the context of this research, participant meanings are situated within their lived realities as migrant educators. At the same time, the primary researcher’s perspective was instrumental in interpreting how participants constructed understandings of work-life balance and flourishing across national contexts. Within this interpretive orientation, Braun and Clarke’s (2012) thematic analysis framework was used as a guide to identify and interpret patterns of meaning in the participants’ lived experiences.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants in this study are Filipino teachers who have worked in schools in the Philippines and are currently teachers abroad. Initial participants were identified through the researcher’s professional network of former colleagues, and subsequent participants were recruited through referrals from these initial contacts, following a snowball sampling approach.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Current Host Country	Philippine Teaching Experience	Teaching Experience Abroad	Former Teaching Assignment	Current Teaching Assignment
P1	52	F	Australia	20	12	Secondary Social Studies	Early Childhood
P2	36	F	China	10	5	Secondary English	Lower Primary English
P3	27	F	Vietnam	6	3	Secondary MAPEH	Secondary Music and PE
P4	42	F	USA (TX)	16	5	Values Education	Secondary ESL
P5	34	F	USA (FL)	5	8	Secondary Filipino	Special Education
P6	35	F	Japan	9	5	Secondary English	Early Childhood English
P7	32	F	USA (NM)	5	6	Special Education	Special Education
P8	48	M	Taiwan	19	7	General Education	Elementary English
P9	55	M	USA (NM)	25	5	Secondary Math	Middle School Math

To be included in the study, participants had to meet the following criteria: (1) Filipino citizenship, (2) previous employment as a classroom teacher in an accredited public or private school in the Philippines, and (3) active employment as a classroom teacher in a foreign country at the time of the interview. Teachers who worked only as substitutes or as volunteer teachers abroad, or who were not currently teaching, were excluded. An additional

exclusion was applied to avoid overrepresentation of a single workplace abroad; as a result, two interviews were removed to reduce clustering within the same school context. The final dataset consisted of nine (9) participants. Their demographics are shown in Table 1. The nine migrant Filipino teachers included varied in age, host-country context, length of teaching experience in the Philippines and abroad, and former and current teaching assignments. Presenting these characteristics helps situate the participants' lived experiences and provides a clearer understanding of the backgrounds from which the themes on work-life balance and human flourishing emerged.

Sample adequacy was assessed by monitoring thematic sufficiency and saturation of recurring patterns during analysis. The data were considered sufficient when recurring patterns relevant to the research questions were consistently observed, and no substantially new insights emerged in subsequent interviews related to work-life balance, flourishing, and their perceived relationship. This supported the adequacy of the nine participant accounts for thematic exploration within this heterogeneous sample.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Several strategies were employed to ensure the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the research findings. To establish credibility, the interview guide used in this research was submitted to three experts in teaching and learning, qualitative research, and administration for validation to ensure its clarity, openness, relevance, appropriateness, and coherence. Their comments and suggestions were noted to revise the guide to its final form. In addition, the interview guide was pilot-tested with two migrant teachers in Vietnam to gauge how actual participants would respond to the questions and to identify which questions needed rephrasing or rewording. Member checking was also initiated by sending the paper to select participants to invite feedback on the accuracy and fairness of the interpretations. The paper was sent to four participants, three of whom confirmed their agreement with the interpretations, while one provided additional information about their experience. This additional input was used to refine the write-up and provide more context in the discussion.

To ensure dependability, the themes generated were carefully re-examined by the researchers by revisiting the transcripts (written and audio) and merging and realigning them. Any disagreements or uncertainties regarding the identification or labeling of themes were resolved through discussion among the researchers until consensus was reached. This collaborative approach ensured that the final themes accurately reflected participants' accounts and strengthened the study's analytic rigor.

To support confirmability, the researcher also sought the opinion of a peer reviewer to review the preliminary themes and their supporting excerpts. Based on this review, theme labels were revised, and excerpts were selected more carefully to match better the themes they were intended to support. A reflexive approach was also evident throughout the research process, particularly given that the initial participants were drawn from the researcher's professional network. The researcher remained mindful of how prior familiarity, shared experiences, and personal assumptions could influence the interpretation of the participants' accounts.

To enhance transferability, the study provides details about the participants' age, host-country context, teaching experience, and teaching assignments to help situate the findings. These contextual descriptions allow readers to assess the possible relevance of the findings to other migrant teacher populations.

Data Gathering Procedure

Participants in this study were selected using snowball sampling. In this sampling technique, initial participants were asked to refer to other potential participants from their social network (Ting et al., 2025). This is particularly useful when studying hard-to-reach populations, like in this study, migrant Filipino teachers. The initial participants included the researcher's former colleagues and their referrals, and the network pool has been established. While snowball sampling enabled access to a population that is difficult to reach, it may also shape participant diversity or introduce bias. Because referrals typically occur within existing social or professional circles, the sample may be more homogeneous in background or experience, and some perspectives may not be captured. This limitation should be considered in interpreting the findings.

A formal email was sent to each participant. They are then asked to provide a viable interview schedule, which is conducted either face-to-face (if they are near the researcher) or via Zoom. The interview lasted for about 30 to 60 minutes. The researcher used a semi-structured interview approach, which used open-ended and follow-up

questions to encourage participants to share their thoughts. The participants were free to answer the questions in Filipino or English. Zoom interviews were video-recorded, while face-to-face interviews were audio-recorded. All recordings were transcribed using the TurboScribe application. The transcripts were manually redacted to remove any identifying information about the participants.

Handling of Bilingual Data

Participants were allowed to respond in Filipino or English, and several interviews included code-switching between the two languages. The interviews were transcribed in the participants' original language (s), and the wording of the responses was retained as spoken. For reporting purposes, the researcher translated the Filipino excerpts cited in the manuscript into English. To preserve semantic fidelity and provide transparency, both the original Filipino wording and the English translation were included in the manuscript, especially when the participants' expressions conveyed meanings better appreciated in their original form.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data gathered from the interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke's Framework. According to Ahmed (2025), thematic analysis is one of the most widely used methods for analyzing data, offering a structured yet flexible framework for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within datasets. This particular approach is deemed useful for this research, as the goal is to identify commonalities and patterns in the lived experiences of migrant Filipino teachers (Laxamana, 2026, pp. 17-35). In this study, Braun and Clarke's framework was used within an interpretive phenomenological orientation. The analysis considered both recurring patterns across the interviews and the meanings participants attached to their lived experiences of work-life balance and human flourishing.

Braun and Clarke's framework involves six phases that were implemented in this paper, which include (1) familiarizing with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing the report. Upon completion of the interview, the researcher transcribed the recording and made notes and reflections on the participants' answers. Part of the interpretive process began during the interviews themselves, as the researcher engaged with the participants' narratives and noted moments of resonance, comparison, and reflection that helped illuminate how they understood their experiences. After a thorough reading and re-reading of the transcripts, the researcher revisited these reflections and tried to understand what the participants were conveying about their experiences across their home and host-country contexts. Initial codes were assigned to the responses. These codes reflected recurring ideas, participant meanings, and the ways they interpreted their own experiences. These codes are then grouped according to their similarities and how they make sense together. This allowed broader patterns of lived meaning to emerge from the participants' accounts. After all the themes were finalized, they were refined and described how they relate to the research questions. The themes were also refined to clarify what they revealed about the participants' lived meanings of work-life balance and human flourishing. Finally, the write-up on the themes presented a detailed analytical commentary and discussion, corroborated by the data and excerpts from the transcripts.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained through email prior to the interview and was reiterated at the start of each session. With participants' permission, the consent confirmation and the agreement to audio/video recording were captured in the recording. Participation was voluntary, and participants could decline to answer any question or withdraw at any time without penalty. To protect confidentiality, identifying details were removed during transcript redaction, and pseudonyms were used in their place. Audio, video, and transcripts were stored securely and accessible only to the researcher. The study followed standard ethical principles for minimal-risk qualitative research involving adult participants, including respect for persons, confidentiality, and data minimization.

Results and Discussion

The themes presented in this section were derived from the accounts of the nine participants in the final analytic sample. They are organized according to the research questions to show how migrant Filipino teachers described changes in their work-life balance, their understanding of human flourishing, and the relationship between these two concepts. The table below presents the major themes and subthemes that emerged from the participants' accounts, together with the participant codes in which they appeared. The succeeding discussion examines these themes through the participants' lived experiences.

Table 2. Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme	Participants
Migration Reconfigured the Teachers' Everyday Lives	From Overload to Manageable Work	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8
	Quiet Loneliness Abroad	P2, P5, P9
	Personal Growth	P1, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9
Flourishing Meant Thriving as a Person and as a Teacher	Well-Being	P3, P4, P5
	Having Purpose and Impact	P2, P4, P5
	Work-Life Balance Creates Space to Flourish	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P9
Flourishing Within and Beyond Work-Life Balance	Mindset Shapes the Link	P4, P7, P8

Migration Reconfigured the Teachers' Everyday Lives

This theme captures how migration reshaped the participants' daily realities as workers and as individuals. Across the interviews, migration was not described simply as a change of workplace or country, but as a reordering of everyday life itself. For many participants, moving abroad eased the burden of excessive workload, multiple roles, and the constant spillover of work into personal time. At the same time, this improvement in work conditions did not always translate into an easier personal life, as some participants also described loneliness, homesickness, and the absence of familiar social support abroad. Taken together, these accounts suggest that participants perceived migration as bringing both relief and disruption, often reshaping work-life balance in some respects while complicating it in others.

From Overload to Manageable Work

Work-life balance is achieved only when individuals meet both work and personal commitments with minimal role conflict (Kalliath & Brough, 2015). In simpler terms, WLB can occur when people can perform different roles in their lives and ideally commit equal amounts of time and energy to each role. However, for most participants, work spills over into their personal lives as they are seemingly always overloaded with extra tasks and responsibilities. As Participant 3 shared:

"Let me start first with my responsibilities as a public teacher, which I do every day... I work as the MAPEH coordinator... I also have a responsibility as a BAC (Bids and Awards Committee) secretary. ... I am also a majorette coordinator... I am also an event coordinator at school... It is very, very exhausting... You have to work until Sunday, which is not paid."

Teachers tend to perform multiple roles, which takes time away from their personal lives. Roles that are no longer part of what they are supposed to do as teachers, but still have to do. Not only is it exhausting, but the fact that it is not appropriately compensated means the work they provide is not commensurate with the salary they receive. (Algar et al., 2025, pp. 846-855) Sadly, this is not an isolated situation; several other participants noted the heavy burden they faced while teaching in the Philippines. Not only are they given multiple roles to fill, but several administrative tasks cause them to lose focus on teaching and feel overworked. Participant 5 even said:

"My work in the Philippines is really draining... You will lose your energy to teach because there are many administrative tasks... You could really not focus on teaching... I feel like I was overworked and undercompensated. I love my job, but it is too much for me to handle... we only have limited energy because we are also human."

What stands out here is not only heavy work but also role overload, with teachers stretched across tasks that weaken their ability to focus on teaching. When this happens, teaching can lose its meaning, becoming more about compliance and paperwork than about purpose. In that sense, imbalance becomes a condition that degrades being human, not only through exhaustion but through the loss of dignity in work. This aligns with Boy & Ngag (2025), who echo how burnout, poor working conditions, and excessive workloads shape teachers' decisions to leave. Overall, this points to a systemic problem that creates an inhospitable environment for teachers to thrive and perform at their best.

This is in stark contrast to their experience when the teachers moved abroad. Almost all participants shared how the work they do in their host country is much more manageable and bounded. It enabled them to have a life outside of their work. They reclaimed their time and had more control over what they wanted to do. As Participant 8 described this shift clearly:

"It is lighter. I have seen the difference... I can go home early... once I clock out at 4 o'clock, I can go straight home... and I

do not bring work home with me."

The shift was not simply "less work," but more precise boundaries, defined work ends, defined roles, and protected personal time. This is important because these boundaries create space for teachers to recover, reflect, and grow. With time on their side, they get to experience life outside of work, explore other things, pursue different passions, and be in places they never seemed to have time for before. Work-life balance is truly achieved when people are satisfied with their own performance across their various domains of life and have a certain degree of autonomy. Participant 4 said:

"In the Philippines, I do not have much time to spend on myself. I wanted to have time for myself, but I cannot. I have more time for myself here. I also realized that I got to know myself better here... what I want to do and when I will say no... And my travel also improved... I also learned how to drive... I achieved a lot here for myself."

Taken together, these accounts from migrant Filipino teachers suggest that many participants perceived that their work-life balance improved after moving from the Philippines to their respective host countries. It revealed the sad reality that Filipino teachers are overworked and underpaid, and that other countries treat their teachers very differently. Work-life balance plays a significant role in making sure that teachers perform at their best and do not view their work as a burden. Steps need to be taken to change the culture of assigning teachers multiple roles and several administrative responsibilities that deviate significantly from what they are expected to do. These findings suggest that differences in working conditions may continue to shape teachers' decisions to migrate.

Quiet Loneliness Abroad

Migration is not always a clear-cut way to achieve work-life balance. While many participants reported improved workloads and more precise boundaries abroad, some did not experience the same level of happiness and satisfaction. For some, migration caused them to miss life more, not because of increased work at their jobs, but because of the lack of interaction with family and friends. Home is where you find peace, where the presence alone of loved ones alleviates the anxiety and stress associated with work. Being far away, some participants feel that their work-life balance is degraded, despite receiving higher pay and having less work. Participant 9 shared:

"There are many things you used to have in your life that made you happy, but you no longer experience them now in your current life, despite the high salaries that we are getting... Behind that scene... there's loneliness and longing... Even if your income is not that high, you are happy."

This highlights how being alone abroad creates a conundrum in which you seemingly have more, both in time and money, but you have nowhere to spend it. The emotional toll is among the heaviest trade-offs migrant teachers face (Baylous et al., 2025). The quiet loneliness of being away and having fewer connections may cause more stress in their life. Participant 5 described how their personal life becomes more limited because of the practical constraints that limit their mobility and routines:

"My personal life made me miss home because way back in the Philippines, I would just book a taxi, and then I would go anywhere I wanted. But here, I stayed home most of the time since I do not have a car. I was forced to stay at home most of the time, I just sleep and scroll on my phone."

Together, these accounts reveal the two stories of migration. Although work has become more manageable for most, others experience personal strain due to being alone. This suggests that work-life balance after migration may improve in terms of work demands but can remain fragile due to a lack of social and emotional connections. This shows that balance is not only about workload; it also includes belonging and emotional support. Even with better working conditions, flourishing can still feel incomplete when a teacher's personal life becomes socially isolated. This pattern is consistent with studies by Magisay (2025), Real and Flordeliz (2024), and Dannhauser & Seyama-Mokhaneli (2025), which highlight the impact of family separation, isolation, and identity struggles on teachers who choose to migrate and work abroad.

Flourishing Meant Thriving as a Person and as a Teacher

This theme reflects how participants understood human flourishing as a richer, more meaningful way of life that went beyond financial improvement alone. Although salary was often a major reason for migration, the participants did not define flourishing in purely economic terms. Instead, they described it as a condition that

involved becoming a better person, living with greater well-being, and experiencing a sense of meaning and value in their work as teachers. Their accounts suggest that flourishing was understood both inwardly and outwardly: inwardly as growth, happiness, and fulfillment, and outwardly as purpose, contribution, and positive impact on others. In this sense, flourishing was not reduced to success or comfort but was framed as a more holistic experience of thriving in life and in the profession.

Personal Growth

For most of the participants, human flourishing is a matter of personal growth. This means they associate the concept of human flourishing with changes they experience in themselves. This can take the form of changes in perspective, a deeper understanding of personal limitations, and the creation of more opportunities for yourself. Participant 1 shared:

“Flourishing is when you can see yourself changing. Your perspective becomes different. Before, I would think, ‘This is already my limit. I am already a teacher, and this is enough.’ But here, it is different. Just imagine, I could never finish my master’s degree in the Philippines, but here I finished it in a year. You know? It is like... you keep on dreaming... What you used to see before, what you used to go through before... becomes a closed book... and now you are creating another story.”

Other participants see personal growth as a sign of maturity, as it involves developing patience and prevailing through life’s trials. Working abroad alone, far from your family, means you must rely on yourself. Develop your independence to overcome the challenges of living away from home. This independence creates a unique opportunity to overcome struggles one may never have known they could. It forces one to be mature and stomach the downfalls that you may experience. Participant 7 has said:

“Growth is not only what kind of success that you achieve. Growth is how you treat life and how life treats you. It is not only all about happiness. There are also downsides. Growth comes when you realize that life is not just easy and smooth. You have to be challenged to be able for you to grow in life and to be mature enough, continue to be kind. That is where you grow as a person...”

All of this contributes to migrant teachers’ growth as human beings and as educators. As the study highlights, their definition of flourishing paints a picture of triumph and hope, and of the chance to see a better version of themselves.

Well-Being

A better version of oneself begins when you start to see holistic change toward health, happiness, and prosperity. This is not limited to the physical aspect, but also to the person’s social and emotional health. (Singh et al., 2023) In their accounts, flourishing was described as a life in which one’s needs are met, personal time is available, and one lives rather than survives. Participant 3 shared:

“For me, personally, I can say like, you flourish because you feel happy. You can support your needs more than before. You can do anything that you want in your free time...”

This shows how flourishing is seen as a way to have a happier disposition in life. For them, well-being comes in the form of having a more positive outlook, having their needs met, and having time for themselves. This suggests that flourishing for teachers is when they feel less burdened and more capable of living according to their own accord. Participant 5 also emphasized that flourishing is not just about money; it is further linked to a deeper, inner satisfaction.

“Flourishing for me means finding your sense of purpose and finding contentment in whatever you are doing. It is more than just money. I could say that I am flourishing if I am happy, I find a sense of purpose, I find the sense of reward in what I do.”

These excerpts paint a picture of how human flourishing is attributed to the teachers’ well-being. It is the condition in which they feel their needs are met, and their lives are close to the lives they imagined for themselves. In this sense, flourishing becomes sustainable, not temporary, because time and emotional stability are present.

Having Purpose and Impact

In many participants’ accounts, flourishing is framed as an inward experience. However, some define it

differently. Rather than seeing flourishing as developing themselves, they see it in how they affect others' lives. In the world of education, teachers commonly measure success through their accomplishments in the classroom. This includes how the students are progressing academically and behaviorally. It is no surprise that this carried over to the participants' definition of flourishing. Impact and purpose push most educators to do their jobs despite hardships; migration does not change this; having better access does not diminish it; if anything, the participants' accounts suggest it remains central. As participant 2 mentioned:

"Maybe as a teacher, when you teach, and you see your students learning, and they are using it in reality, maybe that is what I call flourishing as a teacher. You are being effective with your students."

This frames flourishing as effectively teaching the students what they needed to learn. Where students can apply what they know and see how it is used in real life. Another participant focused more on the affective side of teaching; aside from knowledge, reaching out to and understanding the students is just as important. Participant 4 said:

"As a teacher, what made me flourish is understanding students... particularly those students who are very challenging... I always believe that these students are good. That is why I always try to win them over even when I am struggling."

Taken together, these excerpts show that human flourishing among teachers is attributable to purposeful teaching. Having a class where students thrive in learning, and their emotions and feelings are understood. Migration may change conditions and environments, but it does not erase educators' drive to make a meaningful impact on their students' lives. These frames flourish as meaningful work: not just being employed but being practical and humane in teaching. When teachers can truly teach without being buried in non-teaching demands, their sense of purpose becomes easier to sustain.

All in all, the meanings participants have attributed to human flourishing closely align with Logan's (2023) definition of flourishing as the state of optimal functioning and well-being across all aspects of an individual's life. At the same time, the participants' accounts suggest that flourishing is not experienced only as an inner state. It also emerges as something shaped by external validation, being supported, recognized, and able to do meaningful work.

Flourishing Emerged from Both Life Conditions and Personal Meaning-Making

This theme suggests that the relationship between work-life balance and human flourishing is best understood as layered rather than direct. Across the participants' accounts, work-life balance referred to the conditions of everyday life, particularly the extent to which work allowed room for rest, personal time, autonomy, and life outside the profession. Human flourishing, however, was described in broader terms that extended beyond balance alone, including personal growth, well-being, purpose, self-understanding, and meaningful engagement with life and work. What emerged from the accounts, therefore, was not a simple cause-and-effect relationship, but a more nuanced one in which balance often created the space in which flourishing could be more fully experienced. At the same time, flourishing was not always described as dependent solely on balanced conditions, since some participants understood even difficult experiences as part of growth through the meanings they attached to them. This indicates that work-life balance shaped the conditions in which flourishing became more possible, while personal meaning-making influenced how those conditions were interpreted.

Work-Life Balance Creates Space to Flourish

A plant requires a few things, but one thing is for sure: it can only flourish when it is provided with a place for it to grow. In this metaphor, the participants emphasize that the balance between work and personal life creates space for them to flourish. When one is bombarded with so many roles, tasks, and expectations, stress and exhaustion can accumulate, leaving little time to explore other areas of one's life. As Participant 5 shared:

"Life is all about balance... when you have balance... You are a teacher, you can be a mom, you can be... a wife... You juggle... different roles. So, in order for you to flourish in all aspects of your life, we need balance... time for yourself is very important... we are not just here for work. We are also here for nurturing relationships,... ourselves,... our relationship with God... that is... having a balance in our work and life is very important for us to flourish and to be the best version of ourselves."

The “space” they describe is created by time, autonomy, and boundaries, all of which are shaped by what the workplace expects and permits. This aligns with Gragnano et al.’s (2020) view of WLB as the compatibility between work and nonwork that supports growth. When workplaces protect time and boundaries, that compatibility becomes possible; when they do not, nonwork life becomes crowded out. When these are present, flourishing becomes more possible. As educators wear many caps, these caps can only be worn properly if one still has enough to give to others. Most educators in the Philippines do not have this luxury; most of their time is committed to their job, even spilling over into their personal time (Algar et al., 2025). Some participants also shared their sense of imbalance and how it reduces their ability to flourish. Participant 3 mentioned:

“Yeah. 100% for me. If you are loaded from work, you have no time for yourself. How can you grow? How can you do your things? Because you do not feel happy. If you are not happy with your work, you are not flourishing. They can support their needs, but they are not happy. So, for me, that is not flourishing.”

These accounts suggest that work-life balance affects human flourishing, as both balance and imbalance influence teachers' flourishing. The space created by balance opens possibilities, chances to thrive, and to become better human beings. On the contrary, participants who described a lack of balance often associated it with dissatisfaction and more limited growth opportunities.

Mindset Shapes the Link

While it is true that balance creates opportunities to flourish, hardship and struggles also play a role in our growth. The difficulties that an individual encounters can make or break their sense of flourishing; hence, it is all in the mindset. Because WLB is partly perceptual and priority-based, some participants interpret imbalance differently depending on what they value and how they make meaning of strain (Gragnano et al., 2020). A mindset shapes how one sees their current situation. What is negative for some may bring out the best in another person. Participant 4 exemplifies this:

“Based on my experience, no. It does not affect my flourishing because whether the experience is positive or negative. I always look at the brighter side. I do not want to dwell too much on the negative. That is why I always look for a solution because I believe... that is where I grow... where I develop myself... that is where I draw strength from my negative experiences so that I can truly flourish.”

This excerpt vividly illustrates how mindset shapes one’s perception of a situation and how that can be used to flourish. Another participant shared how they thrive in both their home and host school settings. Participant 8 said:

“I flourished in both cases, in the Philippines and abroad, but in two different ways. In the Philippines, what I learned and the hardships I experienced gave me an opportunity to see teaching in a different light. And now that I am here abroad, basically, it is the time that I have for myself that I can now dedicate to professional development.”

Although it may sound like struggles and negative experiences are being romanticized, these accounts should not be read as suggesting that imbalance or suffering is inherently beneficial. Rather, they show that some participants interpreted difficult experiences in ways that helped them make sense of growth. At the same time, mindset should not be used to excuse unhealthy systems. A strong mindset may help a teacher survive, but humane working conditions are what make flourishing realistic.

Conclusion

Overall, this research shows that migration is more than just an economic story. It is personal, deep, and meaningful. Within this sample, participants described migration as reconfiguring their everyday lives. Migrant Filipino teachers who are often overworked and underpaid in their home countries find a significant improvement in their workload when they migrate abroad. Many participants perceived migration as improving their work-life balance by restoring time and autonomy. However, it may also entail an emotional cost. Some participants also described loneliness and longing for the life they left behind at home. This shift also shows how schools, as organizations, shape teachers’ daily realities: how roles are assigned, how boundaries are respected, and what kinds of support are available. In settings where work is structured and bounded, teachers regain not only time but also a sense that their work is humane and sustainable.

For the teachers, human flourishing meant thriving as a person and as a teacher. It may be attributed to internal factors, such as personal growth and a sense of a life worth living. It can also be external, where the teacher sees the impact and purpose of their job on their students' success. In this sense, human flourishing was not reduced to financial gain alone but understood as a fuller, more meaningful experience of life and work.

The findings suggest that the relationship between work-life balance and human flourishing is not straightforward. For many participants, work-life balance mattered because it created the conditions to rest, reflect, pursue personal goals, and experience life beyond work. In this sense, balance often made flourishing more possible. At the same time, flourishing was not described as dependent solely on balance. Some participants still understood difficult or imbalanced experiences as part of growth, particularly when these were interpreted through endurance, reflection, faith, or self-development. This suggests that while work-life balance shaped the conditions in which flourishing could be experienced, the meanings participants attached to their experiences also influenced how flourishing was understood.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that flourishing is both personal and structural: teachers bring their mindset, but organizations create the conditions that make balance and therefore flourishing more realistic. While this study focused on Filipino migrant teachers, the findings may be transferable to other migrant teacher populations that experience similar organizational and personal dynamics across international contexts. The themes of reconfigured everyday lives, flourishing as personal and professional thriving, and flourishing within and beyond work-life balance are relevant to many groups of migrant educators worldwide, especially in contexts with comparable school structures or migration motivations.

The conclusions drawn in this study are based on the research findings; however, they should be understood in light of several limitations. Although the researchers made every effort to ground the interpretations in the participants' actual accounts, the small qualitative sample may limit the generalizability of the claims. Likewise, because snowball sampling was employed, some inherent bias may have been present, especially given that the initial participants came from the researcher's professional network. In addition, the findings relied on retrospective self-reports, as the participants compared their past experiences in the Philippines with their present experiences abroad. The varied host-country and teaching contexts of the participants also mean that their experiences cannot be treated as entirely uniform. Finally, because migration is often associated with sacrifice and improvement, some participants may have described their experiences in ways that emphasized positive change. These limitations do not weaken the value of the study, but they do suggest that the findings should be interpreted as context-bound and exploratory rather than broadly generalizable.

Recommendations

The findings of this study first point to several recommendations grounded in the participants' accounts. One of the most meaningful changes described by the participants was the clearer separation between work and personal life that they experienced after migration. Schools may therefore consider taking deliberate steps to protect teachers' time boundaries, ensuring they have time for rest, self-care, and other meaningful pursuits beyond work. Clearer expectations may also be developed regarding after-hours responsibilities, protected planning time within the school day, and deadlines that do not presume weekend or late-night labor. Teachers should not be placed in situations where home time is constantly consumed by heavy work that properly belongs within working hours.

The participants' accounts also point to the value of stronger psychosocial support for migrant Filipino teachers, many of whom quietly endure loneliness and homesickness while living far from their families and communities. These emotional struggles often remain unseen, yet they can significantly affect well-being and professional functioning. Both host schools and Philippine institutions may therefore consider providing meaningful support through structured induction programs, mentorship, access to counseling, community-building initiatives, and referral pathways for teachers experiencing isolation or distress.

The findings likewise point to the importance of supporting pathways for personal and professional growth, since many teachers associated human flourishing with opportunities for self-development, purpose, and growth. If schools genuinely want teachers to thrive, they may provide avenues for learning, advancement, and leadership. These may include professional development programs, short courses, coaching, further studies, skills training, and leadership opportunities. School leaders may also consider designing realistic growth pathways so that teachers can pursue professional development without sacrificing their rest and personal lives.

Beyond these participant accounts, the findings also suggest broader implications for the Philippine context, particularly regarding the non-teaching workload imposed on teachers. Many Filipino teachers are routinely assigned responsibilities far beyond their formal job descriptions, and this has become so normalized that it is often accepted without question. However, these additional duties create unnecessary strain, drain teachers' time and energy, and pull them away from their core mission of teaching and supporting student learning. The Department of Education and school leaders may therefore consider developing clearer policies that limit non-teaching tasks, conduct audits of teachers' actual workloads, and, by default, remove clerical, administrative, and event-related duties from teachers. Such responsibilities may instead be assigned to designated support personnel with clearly defined roles, so that teachers are not continually treated as clerks, coordinators, or event managers, but rather as educators.

Contributions of Authors

Author 1: Conceptualization, data gathering, data analysis, and writing of the original draft.

Author 2: Conceptual refinement, supervision, review, and editing of the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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