

Original Article

Weathering the Years: Lived Experiences and Retention Motivations of Seasoned Private School Teachers

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Abstract. Local studies on teacher retention motivation in Philippine private schools remain limited, particularly those that examine how seasoned teachers make meaning of their long-term commitment to teaching. This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of eight seasoned private school teachers and examined the personal, professional, and institutional factors that shaped their decision to remain in the profession. Data were gathered through interviews from late 2025 to early 2026 with seasoned private school teachers with 15 years or more experience in secondary private schools within the Division of Davao del Sur, Region XI, Philippines. Thematic analysis shows three major themes and nine emerging themes. Findings revealed the factors in teacher retention in private schools, such as fulfillment in student success, developed emotional resilience through learner diversity, built strong relationships within the school community, and viewed teaching as a form of service. Adaptive teaching practices, inclusive approaches, technology use, professional development, recognition, self-care, and support from school administrators also strengthened their long-term commitment. The teachers' narratives showed that retention was not only a matter of employment continuity but also a process of identity formation, as they came to see themselves as mentors, caregivers, community servants, and committed professionals. These findings may guide private school leaders in designing retention initiatives that support teacher well-being and professional development, build meaningful relationships, and foster a strong sense of purpose.

Keywords: Professional growth; Private schools; Seasoned teachers; Teacher motivation; Teacher retention.

Lower teacher retention rate among private schools negatively affects school stability, teaching quality, student learning, and educational quality. When experienced teachers leave, schools not only lose employees. They also lose mentors, institutional memory, tested classroom practices, and long-term relationships with learners and colleagues. This concern becomes more pressing in private schools, where teachers may experience heavy workload, limited salary growth, fewer benefits, unstable career paths, and varying levels of institutional support. Globally, the need to recruit, support, and retain teachers has become part of wider efforts to strengthen education systems and ensure quality education for all learners (Shaoan et al., 2025). Studies also

show that teacher turnover is closely linked to school leadership, working conditions, salary, administrative support, and teachers' participation in school decision-making (Ingersoll, 1999; Ingersoll & Tran, 2023). Thus, teacher retention should not be viewed only as a staffing issue, but as a matter of teacher welfare, school continuity, and educational quality.

Previous studies show that both personal and institutional factors shape teachers' decisions to stay. International research suggests that teachers are more likely to remain in the profession when they experience good physical and mental health, strong motivation, supportive colleagues, and a school culture that promotes well-being (Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). In hard-to-staff private schools in Sweden, teacher retention was strongly connected to supportive professional communities and positive relationships with colleagues (Casely-Hayford, 2024). Studies in Chile and Australia also show that resilience, fair treatment, supportive leadership, and positive work experiences influence teachers' decisions to remain in teaching (Vergara et al., 2024; Rahimi & Arnold, 2025). These studies point to a common idea: teachers stay not only because of salary or job security, but also because they feel respected, supported, valued, and able to grow in their work. This is consistent with broader policy discussions among teachers that link job satisfaction to meaningful professional learning, mentoring, trust, respect, and school conditions that support well-being (Malaikosa et al., 2025).

Similarly, in the Philippine context, similar patterns have been reported. Fernandez-Docallas and Batani (2021) found that private school teachers in Baguio City remained in teaching because of a sense of fulfillment in serving students, strong relationships, collegial support, and the Filipino value of endurance. Cardino and Naparan (2023) also found that teachers in Catholic private schools in Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay, stayed because of opportunities for growth, a positive workplace, and activities that supported spiritual development. In Cebu City, Anog et al. (2024) emphasized the role of supportive school climate, leadership, fair compensation, and professional growth in sustaining teacher longevity. Taken together, these studies show that Philippine private school teachers are motivated by both professional and personal reasons. Their decision to stay is shaped not only by employment conditions but also by service, relationships, values, faith, commitment, and the meaning they attach to teaching. Likewise, studies in the Davao Region also highlight the role of institutional support in teacher retention. Erick (2020) found that private higher education teachers remained in their schools because of flexible learning support, administrative assistance, salary increases, psychological support, faculty scholarships, and health insurance. Legaspi and Fernandez (2022) reported that mid-career private school teachers stayed because of their passion for teaching, collegial support, a good working environment, professional and spiritual development, and salaries and benefits. These studies provide useful evidence on the factors that encourage teachers to remain in private schools. However, most existing studies focus on identifying retention factors rather than explaining how teachers personally experience and make meaning of these factors over time.

This gap is important in understanding seasoned private school teachers. Teachers who have remained in the profession for many years have already faced a range of challenges, changes, and pressures in their school lives. Their long service makes their stories valuable because they can explain not only what keeps teachers in their work but also how they endure, adjust, grow, and find meaning in it. However, there remains limited local research that deeply explores the lived experiences of seasoned private school teachers in Davao del Sur, particularly regarding how their personal and professional growth, daily teaching experiences, struggles, coping strategies, and sources of motivation shape their decision to remain in private school teaching.

A phenomenological approach is therefore appropriate because teacher retention cannot be fully understood through lists of factors alone. While previous studies have identified salary, leadership, school climate, collegial support, professional development, and well-being as important influences, there remains a need to understand how these are lived and interpreted by teachers in their own contexts. Teacher retention may vary depending on local school culture, community expectations, institutional practices, personal values, and the meaning teachers give to their role. By focusing on lived experiences, this study can provide a deeper view of the personal and professional reasons that sustain seasoned teachers in private schools.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the lived experiences of seasoned private school teachers in the Division of Davao del Sur and understand the factors that motivate them to remain in private school teaching. Specifically, it seeks to describe how their personal and professional experiences shape their decision to stay. The findings may help private school administrators design better support systems, strengthen teacher welfare programs, improve professional development opportunities, and promote a more supportive work environment. The study may also

contribute to broader efforts to support teacher well-being and quality education, particularly in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 3 on good health and well-being and Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, guided by Heidegger's philosophy, to explore and interpret the lived experiences of seasoned private school teachers. The study sought to understand how seasoned private school teachers in Davao del Sur made meaning of their personal growth, professional and pedagogical development, resilience, and commitment to private school teaching despite the various challenges encountered throughout the years. Through in-depth interviews, the study elicited detailed narratives that enabled the identification of shared experiences, motivations, and insights related to teacher retention.

Research Participants

The participants of the study were eight secondary private school teachers in the Division of Davao del Sur during the 2025–2026 academic year. They were selected through purposive sampling because the study required participants with direct and meaningful experience of the phenomenon under investigation. The inclusion criteria required that participants must have at least 15 years of teaching experience and be currently employed in a registered private secondary year level. Teachers with fewer than 15 years of teaching experience, teachers from public schools, retired teachers, and those who were no longer actively teaching were excluded from the study. The sample size was considered adequate for phenomenological inquiry because it provided rich and information-rich accounts of the phenomenon under study. Data collection continued until sufficient information had been obtained to address the research questions, and no substantial new insights emerged from the participants' narratives, indicating that data sufficiency was achieved.

Research Instruments

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researcher. The guide was prepared in both English and Bisaya. It consisted of open-ended questions regarding the participants' teaching experiences, reasons for remaining in private school teaching, sources of motivation, challenges encountered, forms of support received, and insights gained from their long-term teaching journey. To ensure content validity and alignment with the research objectives, the interview guide underwent expert validation by qualified specialists. Their comments and recommendations regarding clarity, relevance, and consistency with the research questions were incorporated before the interviews were conducted.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher secured ethics clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of Davao del Sur State College and obtained the necessary endorsement from the Graduate School. Permission to conduct the study was subsequently requested from the appropriate authorities and school heads of the identified private secondary schools in Davao del Sur. After obtaining approval, the researcher identified potential participants who met the inclusion criteria and invited them to participate in the study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted from August 2025 to October 2025. Before each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, the interview procedures, the potential risks and benefits, the voluntary nature of participation, and the measures taken to protect privacy and confidentiality. Participants were given sufficient time to read the informed consent form and raise questions before signing it. With the participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented with field notes to facilitate accurate transcription. Interviews were conducted in safe, private, and convenient locations agreed upon by the participants. During the interview sessions, the researcher maintained a journal to document observations and important notes. Following each interview, the recordings were transcribed verbatim. The researcher carefully reviewed the transcripts to ensure accuracy before proceeding with data analysis.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Initially, the researcher familiarized herself with the data through repeated reading of the transcripts and by recording preliminary observations. Subsequently, initial codes were generated by identifying significant words, phrases, and statements relevant to the research questions. Related codes were then clustered into broader categories that formed the themes. These themes were reviewed to ensure that they accurately represented the participants' experiences and were sufficiently supported by the

data. Each theme was subsequently defined, named, and interpreted in relation to the study's purpose. Relevant literature was consulted to support and compare the findings. To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, adviser validation was conducted throughout the study. The interview guide, coding procedures, emergent themes, and manuscript were reviewed by the research adviser to ensure consistency, coherence, and alignment with the participants' narratives. Suggestions provided during the review process were incorporated into the analysis and interpretation of the findings. Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement with the data and adviser validation of the coding and thematic development. Dependability was promoted by maintaining a systematic and transparent process of data collection and analysis. Confirmability was enhanced through the use of verbatim transcripts, field notes, and continuous consultation with the adviser to ensure that interpretations were grounded in the participants' accounts rather than researcher bias. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the participants, context, and procedures to enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar settings.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted after securing ethics clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of Davao del Sur State College. The researcher adhered to the ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, privacy, fairness, and honesty throughout the conduct of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed that they could refuse participation, decline to answer any question, or withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. They were likewise informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, the use of audio recording, and the potential risks and benefits associated with participation. Written informed consent was obtained prior to the conduct of the interviews.

To safeguard confidentiality, the participants' real names were not used in the transcripts, analysis, or final report. Instead, pseudonyms or codes were assigned to protect their identities. Signed consent forms, transcripts, and audio recordings were securely stored. Printed documents were kept in sealed envelopes, while electronic files were stored in password-protected folders accessible only to the researcher. After the completion of the required storage period prescribed by the Research Ethics Committee, printed documents will be shredded, and electronic files will be permanently deleted. The researcher also observed fairness in the selection of participants. All teachers who met the inclusion criteria were given an equal opportunity to participate, regardless of sex, age, subject area, position, or school affiliation. The researcher avoided any form of coercion or undue influence, particularly because the participants were drawn from school settings where authority relationships might exist. Furthermore, the findings were reported honestly and accurately without altering or exaggerating the participants' responses. No conflict of interest or external sponsorship was involved in the conduct of the study.

Results and Discussion

The result centers on four aspects: seasoned private school educators' experiences of personal and professional growth; pedagogical practices and strategies; the impact on their teaching identities and commitment to the profession; and factors that contribute to their resilience and motivation to continue teaching despite challenges and setbacks.

Personal and Professional Growth in Private Education

The first research question explored the experiences of seasoned private educators that shaped their personal and professional growth and motivated them to remain in their respective private academic institutions for many years. Based on the participants' narratives, their long years of service exposed them to meaningful experiences that influenced not only their teaching practices but also their values, attitudes, and sense of purpose as educators. These experiences were largely rooted in the everyday realities of teaching in private schools, where they continuously interacted with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents. Through these interactions, the participants came to view teaching not merely as a profession but as a source of personal fulfillment, professional identity, and long-term commitment.

The findings show that both challenges and rewarding experiences shaped the educators' continued stay in private education. Their engagement with students of diverse backgrounds, abilities, and needs helped them become more patient, flexible, and emotionally resilient. At the same time, the relationships they built with students, fellow teachers, school leaders, and parents contributed to a supportive work environment that strengthened their sense of belonging. These experiences allowed them to grow as individuals and professionals while reinforcing their motivation to continue serving in private educational institutions. The major theme,

emerging themes, and core ideas presented in Table 1 provide a structured understanding of how seasoned private educators experienced personal and professional growth throughout their years of service.

Table 1. Personal and Professional Growth Experiences Leading to Retention

Major Theme	Emerging Theme	Core Ideas
Personal and Professional Growth in Private Education	Resilience through Student Diversity	• Demands from new generation learners serve as opportunities to become adaptable • Managing students' differences develops emotional resilience and nurtures personal values
	Professional Growth through Relationships and Skills	• Building strong relationships with students and colleagues creates a supportive professional environment
	Purpose and Identity in Teaching	• Continuous improvement of teaching skills and strategies leads to professional fulfillment • Students' expressions of gratitude provide emotional rewards, motivating seasoned private school teachers
	Fulfillment through Student Success	• Students' strong performance in their academic journey and later career gives a sense of fulfillment

The first major theme is personal and professional growth in private education, with emerging themes including resilience through student diversity, professional growth through relationships and skills, purpose and identity in teaching, and fulfillment through student success.

Resilience Through Student Diversity

Engagement with students' diverse behaviors, backgrounds, and learning needs emerged as a major experience that shaped the personal growth and emotional resilience of seasoned private school teachers. For the participants, teaching at private institutions for many years exposed them to different generations of learners whose attitudes, values, classroom behaviors, and learning styles changed over time. These changes required them to adjust, reflect, and continually improve their relationships with students. Rather than viewing these challenges only as difficulties, the participants considered them as experiences that helped them become more patient, flexible, and understanding.

One participant shared that handling the current generation of learners has become a major challenge in teaching:

P1: *“One of my challenges is handling students, especially with this new generation.”*

This experience reflects the generational gap that continues to affect teaching and learning. Josephine and Jones (2022) explained that generational differences may create mismatches in expectations, communication styles, and classroom interactions. Similarly, Dejacto et al. (2023) noted that older teachers may face challenges, including disruptive behavior, improper use of technology, and declining academic performance among learners. However, they also emphasized that these challenges may be addressed through stronger classroom discipline, parent-teacher cooperation, and improved ICT literacy among teachers. In the present study, these generational challenges became opportunities for seasoned private school teachers to adapt and strengthen their classroom management practices.

Aside from generational differences, the participants also emphasized that students come from varied family backgrounds, values, personalities, and life experiences. These differences affected how students behaved, interacted, and responded to instruction.

P2: *“So there are a few experiences that really shape me as a teacher, one was during my first year, with a struggle to handle a very active class, most of them came from different families.”*

P3: *“What contributed to my personal growth was the time that I started teaching. I taught different students with different attitudes, having different values, and with those experiences, I became the wizard of the school.”*

These accounts suggest that student diversity became a formative part of the teachers' personal and professional development. Managing learners with different attitudes, values, abilities, and backgrounds required them to be more inclusive, responsive, and emotionally prepared. This finding is consistent with studies showing that student diversity, including differences in social class, nationality, religion, culture, and learning style, influences classroom management and instructional decisions (Semião et al., 2023; Collie et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2022). Other studies also noted that differences in race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background may affect students' social and behavioral outcomes in school (Haskell, 2023; Kornienko et al., 2024; Prior et al., 2025). Thus, the participants' experiences show that teaching diverse learners requires not only pedagogical skill but also emotional strength and cultural sensitivity.

Over time, these experiences helped seasoned private school teachers develop important personal qualities. Their continued effort to understand students' personal and academic struggles strengthened their patience, empathy, communication skills, humility, compassion, flexibility, and sense of responsibility. These values are reflected in the following responses:

P2: *"Facing challenges in a classroom made me more patient and consistent."*

P6: *"It shapes me to become a better person. Naturally, it also shapes how I communicate with others, because I'm not that kind of person. I am always used to being at the house."*

The participants' narratives indicate that student diversity not only tests their teaching ability but also shapes their character. Through repeated exposure to classroom challenges, they learned to regulate their emotions, adjust their responses, and become more reflective in dealing with learners. Tolentino (2022) noted that teachers with greater experience and higher emotional intelligence tend to perform better because they become more emotionally mature over time. Similarly, teachers develop character strengths such as compassion, temperance, and resilience through their professional roles (Espinosa, 2024; Schwan et al., 2020). Experienced teachers also tend to develop stronger emotional competence, which supports adaptability, leadership, communication, and teaching effectiveness (Lu & Chen, 2024; Jefferson et al., 2024).

Moreover, emotional competence contributes to better classroom management. Studies have shown that teachers who demonstrate learner support, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy are more likely to manage classrooms effectively (Calandri et al., 2025; Holzer et al., 2024; Ismail et al., 2023; Gebczynski & Kutsyuruba, 2022). In this study, the seasoned private school teachers' ability to respond to diverse learner needs strengthened their emotional resilience and reinforced their commitment to remain in private education. Their experiences show that classroom diversity, while challenging, became a meaningful source of growth, purpose, and long-term professional commitment.

Professional Growth Through Relationships and Skills

The second emerging theme shows that strong relationships within the private school community and the continuous improvement of teaching skills strengthened the professional growth of seasoned private school teachers and encouraged them to remain in private education. For the participants, teaching in a private institution was not limited to classroom instruction. It also involved building meaningful relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, and other members of the school community. These relationships fostered a sense of belonging, professional support, and workplace satisfaction, helping sustain their commitment to their respective institutions.

P7: *"My students, I realized that they learned not just because of my teaching and good lesson plan but because I built a relationship with them."*

P2: *"Being a teacher is a truly rewarding journey filled with ups and downs, and for me, teaching is not a job; it's a lifelong journey in learning together with my students."*

These narratives suggest that positive relationships with students and colleagues supported the participants' professional growth and strengthened their motivation to stay in private schools. Strong relationships within the school community promote collaboration, improve teaching practices, increase job satisfaction, and contribute to

teacher retention (Ventista, 2023; Cheng et al., 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2021). Similarly, school-based research in Davao del Sur showed that collegiality contributes to teachers' professional growth, while collaborative school cultures play an important role in professional development (Quines & Montezza, 2023; Khasawneh et al., 2023). Qualitative evidence also shows that positive teacher-student engagement increases teachers' job satisfaction and motivates them to continue learning professionally (Luo, 2023).

The participants also explained that building relationships with students allowed them to understand learners' needs more deeply. As they became more aware of students' differences in language, abilities, learning styles, and backgrounds, they recognized the need to adjust their classroom management, communication, and teaching strategies.

P2: "So several key experiences significantly contributed to my personal growth as a teacher in my current years. I struggle with classroom management and lesson delivery because of some factors, like language barriers, because I am an Ilocana and I usually use Tagalog and the Filipino language as my medium of instruction."

P5: "In my early years, I struggled with classroom management and lesson delivery, or a language barrier. So I am Ilocano, and we have to cope with communication challenges due to a language barrier. Ilocano and Bisaya are so different, so that's the language, so Filipino and English are also used, so no choice since we landed here, so we have to use Bisaya, and the student is Bisaya."

These accounts highlight how seasoned private school teachers learned to adjust their communication strategies to make learning more accessible to students. In diverse classrooms, language barriers can affect both teaching and learning, requiring teachers to modify their language use and instructional delivery (Estrada et al., 2025). Teachers may address these barriers through contextualized communication, scaffolding, differentiated materials, and, when necessary, the use of students' native language (Salvador, 2024; Tai, 2022; Huang et al., 2024). In this study, such adjustments became part of the teachers' professional learning and helped them become more responsive to their students' needs.

The participants also identified student feedback as an important source of professional growth.

P7: "Their feedback made me feel that I have made something for them. Ma'am, our students are very good critics; whatever they say about us, if we don't see it as positive, then we will lose. Then, if we see it positively, we will grow."

This response suggests that seasoned private school teachers viewed feedback as a tool for reflection and improvement. Student feedback can help teachers improve their teaching when used constructively (Brooks et al., 2021). Student voice practices are also associated with better classroom interaction and a more positive classroom climate (Conner et al., 2025). When teachers act on feedback, they can refine their instructional strategies and improve students' learning experience (Röhl et al., 2025).

Purpose and Identity in Teaching

The third emerging theme shows that the multifaceted nature of teaching in private schools strengthened the teachers' professional identity and sense of purpose. Through many years of service, the participants came to understand teaching not only as the delivery of lessons but also as a vocation that required care, guidance, patience, and service. Their experiences allowed them to see themselves in different roles: as mentors, second parents, advisers, companions, and community servants. These roles shaped their understanding of their work and deepened their commitment to remain in private education.

One participant described teaching as an experience that allowed her to become a mother figure to many learners:

P6: "I only think about myself, being a mother to children, even though I don't have a husband, but being a mother to many children, that's all I look at in those experiences. As a teacher for 18 years."

This statement shows that the participant's identity as a teacher extended beyond academic instruction. For her, teaching involved nurturing students and providing care similar to that of a parent. This reflects how long years of teaching can transform educators' self-understanding, as they begin to view their role as deeply connected to

students' emotional, moral, and personal development.

Teachers in private schools often perform a wide range of responsibilities beyond classroom teaching. Aside from instruction, they also attend to administrative tasks, student concerns, mentoring duties, communication with parents, and other forms of support within the school community. Malaikosa (2025) noted that teachers manage multiple obligations, including instruction, administrative work, and pastoral care. Similarly, Jumdani et al. (2024) emphasized that teachers often function as facilitators, mentors, communicators, and parent-like figures to their learners. These overlapping roles require teachers to be flexible, responsive, and emotionally prepared to meet the varied needs of students and the school community.

In this study, the participants' experiences suggest that these multiple roles did not weaken their commitment. Instead, they helped them develop a stronger sense of professional meaning. By serving students in academic and personal ways, the teachers were able to see the broader value of their profession. Their identity was shaped not only by what they taught but also by how they guided, supported, and cared for learners over time. Thus, the multifaceted nature of teaching reinforced the participants' sense of purpose and belonging in private education. Their long-term exposure to different teaching roles helped them understand that being a teacher involves continuous adjustment, service, and personal investment. When teachers experience fulfillment and accomplishment in these roles, they become more motivated to stay in the institution where they feel valued and needed (Ragas et al., 2024). This finding shows that professional identity and purpose are important factors that sustain seasoned private school teachers' commitment to their work.

Fulfillment Through Student Success

The fourth emerging theme shows that students' growth, gratitude, and success provided a deep sense of fulfillment that sustained seasoned private school teachers' commitment to private education. For the participants, seeing their students develop confidence, improve academically, express appreciation, and succeed in later educational or professional paths affirmed the value of their work. These experiences reminded them that teaching was not only a means of employment but also a meaningful profession that allowed them to make a lasting difference in students' lives.

The participants shared that there were moments when they considered leaving private school teaching, particularly because of financial concerns and the possibility of transferring to public schools. However, their positive experiences with students helped them remain committed to their institutions. One participant expressed this experience:

P4: "There are times that I will go to public schools, but these moments I considered learning or leaving or transferring to public school, but in what I observe, I enjoyed my life as a private school teacher. So, there are moments that I will leave my private school teaching experience to go to public school, like for example, financial reasons, but I survived, I survived from private school."

This statement suggests that although financial concerns became a reason for considering leaving, the participant's meaningful experiences in private school teaching helped sustain her commitment. Her use of the word "survived" reflects the challenges of remaining in private education, but it also shows endurance, attachment, and personal satisfaction in the profession.

Another participant described how students' growth and confidence brought joy and meaning to her teaching career:

P5: "These experiences fulfilled me, seeing my students grow in confidence and learning a deep sense of joy and focus in this line of profession."

This response shows that students' progress served as an emotional reward for the teacher. Seeing learners become more confident and capable gave the participant a stronger sense of purpose and reinforced her decision to continue teaching. In this sense, student success became a form of professional validation because it allowed teachers to see the visible results of their effort, patience, and guidance. The participants' narratives indicate that fulfillment in private school teaching was strongly connected to the outcomes they observed in their students. Students' achievements, gratitude, and personal growth strengthened teachers' belief in the transformative power

of education. These experiences also helped them cope with the profession's difficulties, including financial constraints, heavy workloads, and periods of uncertainty. Teaching became meaningful because the participants saw that their work contributed to students' academic, personal, and future success.

This finding is supported by studies showing that teachers experience a sense of purpose and achievement when they see their students grow and succeed because teaching is a relational and purpose-driven profession (Pedditzi et al., 2021; Galeng, 2025). Students' success also validates teachers' efforts and reflects the effectiveness of their teaching practices, which strengthens their sense of professional efficacy (Burić et al., 2024; Sadeghi et al., 2021). In the present study, students' success and gratitude served as meaningful reminders of why participants chose teaching and why they remained in private education.

Pedagogical Practices and Strategies

Throughout their years of service, the seasoned private school teachers developed a wide range of pedagogical practices and strategies shaped by their classroom experiences, professional reflections, and understanding of students' diverse learning needs. As previously discussed, students differed in abilities, behaviors, interests, learning styles, and personal backgrounds. These differences required teachers to adopt flexible, responsive, and learner-centered approaches to instruction. Over time, the participants learned to adjust their teaching practices to ensure lessons were meaningful, accessible, and appropriate to their learners' needs.

The participants' pedagogical practices reflected a combination of traditional and modern approaches. While they continued to use established teaching methods that supported discipline, mastery, and structured learning, they also integrated more interactive, contextualized, and technology-supported strategies suited to present-day learners. Their instructional decisions were guided by one common purpose: to help students acquire the knowledge, skills, values, and confidence needed for academic progress and personal development. Thus, their teaching strategies were not merely routine practices but intentional responses to the changing needs of students in private school settings.

Table 2 presents a structured overview of the pedagogical practices and strategies employed by seasoned private school teachers, including how these approaches supported classroom instruction and student learning. The succeeding discussion explains the major patterns that emerged from the participants' narratives and highlights how their teaching practices contributed to more effective, inclusive, and responsive learning experiences.

Table 2. Pedagogical Practices and Strategies		
Major Theme	Emerging Theme	Core Ideas
Pedagogical Practices and Strategies	Using Student-Centered Pedagogies for Inclusive Learning	● Applying a differentiated approach to cater to the needs of students ● Applying interactive activities to stimulate students' attention and focus in class ● Peer-supported differentiation to prioritize students who need more support ● Administering translation-based localized instruction
	Implementation of Technology-Integrated Pedagogy in the Class	● Integration of technology helps make teaching strategies more effective

The second major theme is pedagogical practices and strategies, with its respective emerging themes such as using student-centered pedagogies for inclusive learning and implementation of technology-integrated pedagogy in the classroom.

Using Student-Centered Pedagogies for Inclusive Learning

Most seasoned private school teachers adopted learner-centered approaches because they enabled students to participate actively in classroom tasks. Some participants used differentiated instruction, interactive activities, peer-supported approaches, and translation-based localized instruction. These approaches helped them respond to students' varied learning needs, abilities, and backgrounds. They also showed how teachers adjusted their teaching practices over time to make learning more inclusive and effective.

Several participants shared their experiences with the convenience and effectiveness of learner-centered and differentiated approaches in meeting students' needs.

P7: *"I have developed differentiated instruction to meet the varied learning skills of our students. Through varied instruction, we can adjust to them, and at the same time, adjust our teaching."*

P2: *"Differentiation helps me reach every learner at their own pace, makes them feel more supported, and makes my teaching more effective and responsive."*

Differentiated instruction is widely recognized as an important strategy for addressing learners' diversity in readiness, ability, and learning styles (Langelaan et al., 2024). Modifying assessments, personalizing instruction, and varying classroom activities are ways to respond to students' different abilities and learning speeds (Rosario et al., 2024). Studies also show that differentiated instruction can significantly improve learners' academic performance compared with traditional instruction (Pinaranda & Sario, 2024).

Some seasoned private school teachers also used interactive activities to stimulate students' attention and sustain their focus during class. This is reflected in the response below:

P5: *"As a science teacher, I use many activities and interactive learning strategies."*

Interactive pedagogy improves students' achievement and self-confidence by encouraging better concentration, participation, and attention in the classroom (Agwu & Nmadu, 2023). Interactive instructional strategies also help prevent boredom and disengagement by moving away from purely lecture-based teaching approaches (Huang, 2025; Godsk & Møller, 2025).

Moreover, some participants used peer-supported differentiation to give more attention to students who needed additional academic support. One participant explained:

P4: *"I develop strategies that motivate students. I prioritize slow learners over intelligent ones. I assign them as leaders in different activities so that they can develop self-confidence, which I value most."*

Studies on evidence-based peer-mediated reading programs show that struggling learners can improve when they are supported by their peers (Avci, 2025). Peer support allows for more individualized interaction, attention, and social learning. This suggests that when teachers combine differentiated instruction with peer-supported learning, they can better support students who need extra assistance due to academic gaps or different learning styles (Haelermans, 2022).

Consequently, one participant used translation-based localized instruction by translating English terms into Bisaya, the local language her students use. This helped students understand the lesson more clearly.

P3: *"The pedagogical strategy I used during my first year of teaching was translation. We had to translate basic words from English into our dialect so that the students could understand better."*

Using translation-based localized instruction is a practical way to deliver lessons effectively, especially when language barriers are present. Teachers and students may come from different linguistic backgrounds, which can make meaning-making in the classroom difficult. In such cases, translation helps bridge the gap by making vocabulary, complex ideas, and abstract concepts more accessible to learners (Karima, 2025; Robillos, 2023; Ramadhan, 2022).

The participants' use of student-centered pedagogies shows their commitment to inclusive and responsive teaching. Through differentiated instruction, interactive activities, peer-supported learning, and localized translation, seasoned private school teachers adjusted their teaching practices to meet the diverse needs of their students. These strategies helped create a classroom environment in which learners could participate more actively, understand lessons more clearly, and receive support tailored to their individual needs.

Implementation of Technology-Integrated Pedagogy in the Classroom

The second emerging theme is the implementation of technology-integrated pedagogy in the classroom. In the digital era, seasoned private school teachers witnessed how technology influenced students' learning behaviors,

classroom engagement, and access to information. Some participants recognized the need to integrate digital tools into their classroom discussions to make instruction more relevant, interactive, and engaging. This also required them to adjust their traditional teaching practices and accept that some methods that worked in the past may no longer be as effective for present-day learners.

One participant emphasized that technology integration helped teachers connect with students who were already familiar with gadgets and digital tools:

P6: "One of the strategies is the integration of technology, especially at this time when our students are very good at using technology and gadgets. We take that as part of our teaching. Using the gadgets they have also makes our teaching easier, especially with AI now. It really helps us as well."

This response shows that technology was not viewed merely as an additional classroom tool but as a practical strategy for improving instruction and responding to students' digital orientation. The participant acknowledged that learners today are already exposed to technology and that teachers can leverage this familiarity to support learning. In this sense, technology integration became a way for seasoned private school teachers to remain adaptive, relevant, and responsive to the needs of modern learners.

Studies support the positive role of digital tools in classroom instruction. Teng and Wang (2021) found that technological tools improved different dimensions of student engagement, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement, compared with traditional teaching methods. Similarly, Tautz et al. (2021) reported that lecture recordings, question tools, virtual reality, and classroom response systems increased students' active learning and provided more opportunities for feedback, making lectures more dynamic and interactive. Digital tools also serve as interactive channels that encourage student participation and strengthen classroom engagement (Digout & Samra, 2023).

The participants' use of technology-integrated pedagogy reflects their willingness to adjust to the changing educational landscape. By incorporating digital tools, gadgets, and emerging technologies such as AI, seasoned private school teachers made their teaching practices more engaging, accessible, and aligned with the realities of today's learners. This finding suggests that professional adaptability remains an important quality among experienced teachers, especially as classroom instruction continues to evolve in response to technological change.

Resilience and Motivation Despite Challenges and Setbacks

Despite the challenges and difficulties they encountered throughout their years of service, seasoned private school teachers remained committed to their respective institutions. Their long-term stay in private education reflects their resilience, perseverance, and sustained motivation. The experiences shared by the participants show that resilience did not develop instantly; rather, it emerged through a continuing process shaped by personal values, professional experiences, supportive relationships, and institutional conditions.

The participants' narratives suggest that their motivation to remain in private education was influenced by several factors, including encouragement from colleagues, support from school administrators, meaningful relationships within the school community, and support from their families. Their internal values, such as patience, commitment, faith, a sense of service, and love for teaching, also helped them cope with challenges and adapt to changes in the teaching profession. These sources of support enabled them to continue fulfilling their roles despite setbacks, uncertainties, and the demands of teaching at a private school.

Table 3 presents the factors that influenced the resilience and motivation of seasoned private school teachers to continue thriving in a private school setting. The succeeding discussion explains how these factors helped sustain their commitment, strengthen their coping capacity, and reinforce their decision to remain in private education.

Table 3. *Resilience and Motivation to Continue Teaching Despite Challenges and Setbacks*

Major Theme	Emerging Theme	Core Ideas
Resilience and Motivation Despite Challenges and Setbacks	Interpersonal Relationships and Intangible recognitions	Family influence, student welfare, supportive colleagues and school administrators, and salary growth sustain seasoned private school educators' commitment to teach
	Holistic Self-Care and Well-Being Practices	Receiving gratitude and appreciation from the

Private Academic Institutions led Initiatives and Motivation	• students and colleagues helps retain teachers. • Having time for physical, psychological, social, and spiritual care helps overcome setbacks • Strong social and financial support from administrators • Faith-based retreats and spiritual renewal
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The third major theme is resilience and motivation despite challenges and setbacks, with emerging themes including interpersonal relationships and intangible recognition; holistic self-care and well-being practices; and private academic institution-led initiatives and motivation.

Interpersonal Relationships and Intangible Recognition

The participants were asked about the factors that kept them motivated to continue teaching despite the difficulties they experienced in private academic institutions. One emerging response was the value of interpersonal relationships. Specifically, relationships with students, colleagues, parents, school administrators, and family members helped sustain their motivation. For many participants, students’ welfare, curiosity, eagerness to learn, small victories, and expressions of gratitude served as meaningful reasons to continue teaching despite classroom challenges and instructional demands. Positive relationships within the school community also gave them a sense of satisfaction, belonging, and purpose. Although salary increases based on years of service were also mentioned as a retention factor, participants’ responses emphasized that relational and emotional rewards played a stronger role in sustaining their commitment.

One participant shared that motivation came from the positive relationships built within the school community:

P3: *“What keeps me motivated to continue teaching in a private institution is that the school made me the ‘wizard of the school’ and the ‘walking dictionary,’ as my students call me. I also find satisfaction in building positive relationships with my co-teachers, students, and the families of my students.”*

P5: *“Salary increases according to the number of years of service in this institution. Second, the students – their curiosity, eagerness to learn, and the small victories they achieve – remind me why I continue. Lastly, the community also motivates me because I work with joy when I see my students.”*

These responses suggest that teacher motivation in private schools is shaped not only by financial considerations but also by meaningful relationships and emotional fulfillment. Previous studies have shown that many private school teachers continue to stay in private institutions despite financial constraints because of supportive working environments, positive school culture, and strong relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators (Sumipo, 2020; Anog et al., 2024). This further indicates that intrinsic motivation, sense of purpose, and relational satisfaction may be more influential than monetary rewards for some private school teachers (Gozon et al., 2023).

Aside from interpersonal relationships, intangible recognition also emerged as an important source of motivation. Participants expressed that being appreciated, valued, and affirmed by students, parents, and colleagues strengthened their desire to remain in the profession. For them, appreciation served as a reminder that their efforts had meaning and that their work contributed to students’ learning and development.

P2: *“I look forward to their appreciation, not only in the good side of their learning but also in the challenges they encounter along the way.”*

P5: *“Externally, I look forward to appreciation – not only in the good side of learning but also in the learning experiences and challenges they face. The support of parents also plays an important role in their children’s success.”*

These narratives show that appreciation and recognition functioned as emotional reinforcement for the participants. Teachers often experience heavy workloads, emotional demands, and classroom pressures; therefore, expressions of gratitude from students, parents, colleagues, and administrators can validate their efforts and strengthen their commitment to teaching. This is supported by Ortan (2021) and Sadeghi et al. (2021), who noted that appreciation and recognition can reinforce teachers’ motivation and commitment despite the profession's demands. This finding also aligns with self-determination theory, which explains that recognition supports

teachers' need for relatedness and competence. Relatedness refers to the feeling of being connected with others, while competence refers to the feeling of being effective in one's work. When teachers feel appreciated and valued, they are more likely to remain engaged, motivated, and committed to their institution (Forner et al., 2024; Bradfield, 2024).

Holistic Self-Care and Well-Being Practices

The second emerging theme highlights holistic self-care and well-being practices as coping strategies used by seasoned private school teachers to manage professional difficulties. Because of the demanding nature of teaching, the participants recognized their vulnerability to exhaustion, stress, and burnout. To cope with these challenges, they practiced different forms of self-care that supported their physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. Some participants engaged in rest, healthy eating, and leisure activities, while others relied on professional support, social connection, faith, and perseverance.

P3: *"To manage setbacks in my teaching, I make time for activities such as reading, watching movies related to my lessons, taking a quick nap, and maintaining a healthy diet. I prioritize self-care, seek support from my co-teachers, and attend professional development programs."*

P8: *"The personal coping strategies that I use to manage setbacks are spiritual faith and perseverance."*

These responses show that the participants' coping strategies were not limited to one aspect of well-being. Instead, they practiced holistic self-care by attending to their physical health, emotional needs, professional growth, social support systems, and spiritual resources. These practices helped them recover from stress, maintain balance, and continue fulfilling their responsibilities as teachers.

Previous studies support the importance of self-care in sustaining teachers' resilience and well-being. Teachers who engage in regular physical activities show lower levels of stress and emotional exhaustion, and physical activity can reduce the negative effects of stress on health outcomes (González-Valero et al., 2023; da Silva et al., 2024; Aperribai et al., 2020). Psychological self-care also helps reduce the effects of stress and burnout while improving overall well-being and resilience, allowing teachers to sustain their work over time (Corthorn, 2024; Maratos et al., 2024; Lee, 2019).

Social support also plays an important role in teacher resilience. Supportive relationships with colleagues, family members, and other people in the school community serve as protective factors for teachers whose work is emotionally demanding (Einav, 2024; Cao, 2024; Richter et al., 2022). In addition, spiritual well-being has been linked to lower emotional exhaustion because spirituality can help teachers manage the psychological strain caused by long working hours and job stress (Pong, 2022). Strong spiritual well-being also supports long-term resilience and retention among teachers (Heidari, 2022).

Private Academic Institution-Led Initiatives and Motivation

The third emerging theme highlights private academic institution-led initiatives that sustained the resilience and motivation of seasoned private school teachers. Most participants agreed that the ongoing support from their school administrators, particularly through professional development training and career-related opportunities, helped them remain motivated in their work. Exposure to seminars, benchmarking activities, and other professional learning experiences improved their teaching competence, strengthened their confidence, and developed their creativity and enthusiasm in the classroom.

P7: *"Training, seminars, and benchmarking activities are provided. They also allow us to join outside school activities. I have been abroad many times because of the association, as the president. They conduct seminars, and they support us. They are very supportive."*

Administrative support for teachers' professional development plays an important role in strengthening resilience and motivation. When school leaders invest in teachers' growth, they help teachers develop the pedagogical skills, classroom management strategies, and technological competencies needed to address classroom challenges (Baysal & Mutlu, 2021; He, 2024). As teachers become more capable and confident, they are also more prepared to manage daily classroom stressors and unexpected teaching demands (Li, 2023; Mu, 2024; Hauge, 2019).

Aside from improving competence, administrative support also communicates that teachers are valued members of the school community. When teachers feel their work and professional growth are acknowledged, their stress may decrease and their sense of belonging may strengthen (Li et al., 2025; Einav et al., 2024; Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). Moreover, when administrators provide opportunities for professional advancement, teachers can share new knowledge and skills with colleagues, thereby promoting collaboration, peer support, and a stronger sense of community (Lin, 2022; Sahito & Vaisanen, 2020). Collaboration further strengthens resilience and motivation by reminding teachers that they are not facing professional challenges alone (Nissim & Danial-Saad, 2023).

Clearly, professional development opportunities supported by private school administrators give seasoned teachers clearer pathways for growth. These initiatives motivate teachers when they see that training and professional exposure contribute not only to institutional improvement but also to their personal and professional advancement. Such alignment strengthens their capacity to remain resilient despite the challenges of teaching (Nguyen et al., 2023; Smet, 2021; Sebulen & Jimenez, 2024; Roos & Borkoski, 2021).

In addition to professional development, the participants also emphasized the importance of social and financial support from school administrators. They described administrators who were approachable, responsive, and supportive not only to teaching personnel but also to non-teaching staff.

P4: *"Our bosses are really very good to us. Our relationship with them is like family. It feels as if there is no high or low position because they treat everyone equally. From the staff to the teachers, and from the non-teaching personnel to the teaching personnel, they are very good to us. They support us and provide what we need."*

This statement shows that support from administrators extended beyond formal policies and financial assistance. It also included relational support, fairness, respect, and responsiveness to teachers' needs. These forms of support helped create a workplace environment where teachers felt valued and cared for. The literature also recognizes differences in salary conditions between public and private schools. Private school teachers often experience lower salaries, limited security, and heavier workloads compared with their counterparts in public institutions (Khan et al., 2022; Chudgar & Sakamoto, 2021). In this context, social and financial support from private school administrators becomes especially important in sustaining teachers' motivation and resilience (Forson et al., 2021; Anog et al., 2024). Supportive administration can serve as a safety net, promoting teachers' well-being, performance, and retention (Tran et al., 2023).

Lastly, some private academic institutions supported teachers not only through professional and financial assistance but also through spiritual activities. For some participants, retreats, recollections, Masses, and other religious activities helped them remain grounded, hopeful, and emotionally strong. These spiritual initiatives were meaningful because they reminded teachers of their values, strengthened their faith, and supported their personal formation.

P6: *"As a Catholic, I love that they have retreats that help us make connections because these inspire me to become closer to God. We also have Masses and religious activities. I have been living away from my family for 18 years and staying in a boarding house for that long. Here in the private school, they have recollections and religious activities that supported me in becoming a better person and a better Christian individual."*

This response shows that spiritual activities served as a source of emotional support and personal strength. For seasoned teachers who carry years of accumulated responsibilities and emotional labor, such activities may help them manage stress and remain connected to their deeper purpose. Teaching can involve heavy emotional and physical demands (Precellas & Bauyot, 2025), and spiritual well-being can help teachers regulate emotions, manage chronic stress, and reconnect with the values that sustain their vocation (Engelbrecht-Aldworth, 2023; Binu Raj, 2023). Spiritual activities may also support mental and emotional clarity, prevent burnout, and strengthen teachers' capacity to handle behavioral and administrative pressures in the school setting (Nadifa et al., 2024; Aziz, 2024).

Conclusion

This study concludes that ongoing interactions among personal growth, professional fulfillment, and institutional support shape the long-term retention of seasoned private school teachers in Davao del Sur. Their experiences show that staying in private education is not only influenced by salary or obligation but also by emotional

resilience, strong relationships with students and colleagues, commitment to student welfare, and a strengthened identity as teachers, mentors, and community members.

The study contributes to the existing literature on teacher retention in private schools by demonstrating that experienced teachers remain committed when they find meaning and purpose in their profession, receive adequate institutional support, and continue to experience personal and professional growth. These findings provide deeper insights into the complex and multidimensional nature of teacher retention, particularly within the context of private secondary schools, where non-monetary factors and professional identity play significant roles in sustaining long-term commitment.

The findings also have implications for educational policy and practice. Private school administrators and policymakers may consider developing and strengthening programs that promote teacher well-being, continuous professional development, recognition systems, collegial relationships, and equitable institutional support. Creating supportive and nurturing work environments may contribute to sustaining experienced teachers and improving the quality and stability of private education. Sustaining experienced teachers requires not only asking them to stay but also creating conditions in which they feel valued, capable, and purposeful.

Future studies may expand the scope of investigation by including a larger number of private schools or different geographical areas, comparing the experiences of private and public school teachers, and examining how specific institutional policies and leadership practices influence long-term teacher commitment. Further research may also explore the perspectives of novice teachers and school administrators to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teacher retention in the Philippine educational context.

Contributions of Authors

Author 1: conceptualization, data gathering, data analysis

Author 2: data analysis, assisted in data interpretation

Author 3: proposal writing, data analysis

Author 4: proposal writing, literature reviewer

Author 5: data analysis

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