



Short Paper

TRAVEL: A Teacher's Breakthrough of Work-Life Balance

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Abstract

This study described the successes of teachers and the challenges faced by them. Teachers' breakthroughs were also discussed during the challenges they were facing. This research employed a semi-structured interview to obtain responses from the teacher participants. Results revealed that the successes of teachers include seeing teaching as the noblest profession, teachers being valued by their students, and being a part of students' success in life. It is also important to consider teachers' challenges, focusing on the demands of teaching, students' behavior and needs, and teachers' balance between work and life. As shared by dedicated educators, the breakthroughs in achieving work-life balance were centered on time management, professional development, personal development, stress management, and travel. It is recommended that school leaders review their teaching philosophies with teachers, heightened celebrations of teachers' day, and strengthen alum organizations for homecoming activities to foster the relationships of the graduates with their former teachers. School heads give teachers a break from work, the student discipline manual should be discussed with parents to help implement it, and school heads and policymakers highlight the importance of supporting teachers in their endeavors to recharge and deviate from professional tasks. For teachers to achieve breakthroughs, school heads are encouraged to support their teachers in their professional and personal development efforts. Stress management workshops or



seminars may be given to teachers to alleviate their stress. Most of all, the provision for teacher travel must also be supported and encouraged by school heads and policymakers.

Keywords – the life of a teacher, work-life balance, travel, self-care, time management, stress management

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play an important role in shaping the future of individuals and society. They serve as educators, mentors, and facilitators of personal growth. Their impact extends beyond the classroom, influencing lives and contributing to the development of well-rounded citizens. However, being a teacher is not always easy because of the responsibility that comes with it. Balancing professional responsibilities and personal well-being is still a challenge.

Leisure activities must be incorporated as a form of self-care so teachers can relax from their professional responsibilities. A study by Nong et al. (2022) underscores the importance of incorporating leisure activities, such as travel, to alleviate mental health issues. Engaging in leisure provides a much-needed break from work-related stress and offers relaxation and personal growth opportunities.

There has been a discernible rise in educators who embark on transformative travel experiences in recent years but this is still undocumented. This trend has not only captured the attention of educational stakeholders but has also piqued the curiosity of researchers seeking to understand how these experiences shape and redefine a teacher's professional and personal life. While there is a wealth of literature on work-life balance, such as the study of Dreer (2023), where three significant themes in teacher well-being were emphasized, namely emotional work, professional relationships, and contextual factors, the transformative impact of travel on teachers' ability to strike this balance has received limited scholarly attention.

Recognizing this gap, this research aims to delve into the breakthrough experiences of teachers as they navigate the intricate balance between their roles in education and the rejuvenating experiences derived from travel. By tapping into the narratives and reflections of educators, it seeks to unravel the multifaceted dimensions of this phenomenon, shedding light on both the potential positive influences and challenges teachers encounter in their pursuit of a harmonious balance between their professional responsibilities and the enriching experiences derived from their travels.

This exploration is particularly relevant in the changing education landscape, where teachers are increasingly viewed as holistic individuals with dynamic lives beyond the classroom. Through this research, the researchers aspire to contribute to a more

comprehensive understanding of teachers' breakthroughs in work-life balance, particularly within the unique context of travel. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the successes and challenges of being a teacher?
2. What are the breakthroughs of the teachers' success and challenges?

By unraveling the intricacies of how teachers manage these dual roles, the researchers hope to provide insights that can inform educational practices and policies, fostering a supportive environment that recognizes and nurtures the holistic well-being of educators in the twenty-first century.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher's Job Satisfaction

One must be fulfilled to become an effective teacher. Ker et al. (2023) state that job satisfaction substantially impacts performance, retention, and teaching effectiveness. Sudibjo and Suwarli (2020) also noted in their study that job satisfaction and commitment are positively related to work-life balance. When teachers are satisfied with their jobs, they are more likely to be committed to their roles, leading to improved work-life balance and ultimately enhancing their performance and longevity in the profession. These studies underscore the significance of prioritizing teachers' job satisfaction to foster a positive work environment and promote better educational outcomes.

Challenges Faced by Teachers

The high-pressure environment of the job, along with multiple obstacles, frequently results in burnout, which can ultimately affect the standard of education. According to Boamah et al. (2022), the key reason for acquiring severe burnout is ongoing exposure to occupational stresses such as an excessive workload and work-life interference. This study highlighted how emotional weariness among professors resulted in increased cynicism, emphasizing the detrimental impact of these stressors on individuals' well-being. Kelly et al. (2020) further supported this notion by identifying workload as the leading factor contributing to job stress and burnout, ultimately affecting work-life balance. The evidence from both studies underscores the critical role of workload and work-life interference in fostering burnout among employees, emphasizing the urgent need for organizations to address these issues to promote a healthier work environment and employee well-being.

Self-care and Professional Effectiveness

Understanding the integral connection between self-care and professional effectiveness is crucial for educators, as highlighted by Zeller in a talk referenced by

Anderson (2020), suggesting that self-care benefits educators and students alike. Zeller highlights how self-care benefits educators and students by promoting objectivity, maintaining boundaries, and setting positive examples. Liepina and Mārtinsone (2022) further stress the importance of self-care practices in bolstering teachers' emotional health and resilience, particularly during stressful periods. They advocate for activities like supervision, which provide support and foster stress resilience. These perspectives emphasize self-care's role in individual well-being, professional performance, and creating a positive learning environment.

While the literature on traveling as a form of self-care may be limited, Chen and Petrick's study (2013) sheds light on its significant health and wellness benefits. The research indicates that numerous studies have consistently demonstrated the positive impact of travel experiences on individuals' perceived health and well-being. Specifically, it reveals that people frequently report feeling happier and healthier following a vacation. Moreover, the study highlights a noteworthy finding: traveling can effectively reduce work-related stress levels. This evidence underscores the importance of recognizing travel as a viable means of self-care, capable of rejuvenating individuals and alleviating the burdens of everyday work pressures. By acknowledging and promoting the therapeutic value of travel experiences, individuals and organizations can proactively address stress management and overall well-being, contributing to a healthier and more balanced lifestyle.

Another factor in achieving work-life balance is time management. Effective time management increasingly correlates with job performance, as evidenced by Aeon et al. (2021), who noted a shift towards time management yielding more positive performance reviews since the 1990s, while Shaikh et al. (2023) found in the banking sector that behaviors like goal setting and organization positively impact work-life balance. Mechanics of time management (MTM) mainly emerged as influential in achieving this balance. Such findings underscore the growing importance of effective time management for professional success and maintaining a healthy work-life balance in contemporary workplaces.

Multiple studies underscore the need to address teachers' well-being in educational settings. Cleofas and Mijares (2022) emphasize self-care programs for teachers, especially those in graduate studies, due to increasing concerns for their mental and emotional well-being. Gearhart et al. (2022) advocate for a multifaceted approach, including affirming messages, logistical support, and community-building to ease stress. Agyapong et al. (2023) stress the importance of school-based interventions to enhance teachers' stress-coping mechanisms, urging policymakers and administrators to prioritize these efforts. Aruldoss et al. (2020) highlight the significance of work-life balance for individual and organizational well-being. These studies underscore the need for comprehensive support mechanisms in educational institutions to protect teachers' mental health and improve overall productivity and satisfaction. Initiatives should focus

on individual self-care and systemic factors contributing to stress and burnout, fostering healthier educational environments.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a phenomenological qualitative approach to explore teachers' lived experiences of travel and its impact on work-life balance. According to Nelson (2011), the phenomenological approach centers on understanding a particular phenomenon's immediate experience rather than delving into interpretations or meanings assigned to it later.

The participants were the permanent teachers of Bartolome Sangalang National High School who traveled or anticipated traveling for vacation (international and domestic) during the school years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. Researchers purposively selected these participants to align with the study's objectives. Following Creswell's (2013) recommendations, a sample size of five participants was chosen, fitting within the range for phenomenological research.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews to elicit detailed narratives about the teachers' experiences, perceptions, and reflections on travel and its influence on their professional and personal lives. Patton (1990), as reiterated by Delos Reyes and Bautista-Delos Reyes (2023), emphasized selecting "information-rich cases" for in-depth research to gain deep insights into fundamental issues. The collected data were then analyzed using thematic analysis, a process defined by Maguire and Delahunt (2017) as detecting patterns and themes in qualitative data, allowing researchers to uncover commonalities and variations in teachers' experiences and perceptions.

Ethical considerations included obtaining permission from the school head, informing participants about the research purpose and ensuring their anonymity, securing signed consent letters, and conducting interviews during the respondents' free periods while maintaining respect.

RESULTS

Success of Teachers

Teaching as the Noblest Profession. Teachers enter the field with diverse motivations, some driven by financial necessity and personal satisfaction. They acknowledge teaching as a noble profession and a means of securing their livelihood. As one respondent stated, "Aside from being the noblest profession, it is my meal ticket and a way of having pleasure with the things I need."

Teachers as Valued by Students. Teachers impact students' lives. From being remembered for positive contributions to witnessing students succeed and flourish, these moments define the fulfilling aspect of teaching. A teacher acknowledged, "It is when your past students remember you for good things and learnings that you imparted them. It means that you have touched their lives in some ways." Building meaningful relationships and positively contributing to students' educational journeys are sources of personal satisfaction and purpose.

Seeing Students Succeed in Life. The joy of witnessing students' intellectual breakthroughs adds another layer to the multifaceted view of teaching. A teacher-respondent had said, "Seeing their pupils flourish is the most fulfilling aspect. It may be immensely satisfying to watch a student's learning grow over time, to see the moment when a topic finally connects for them, and to know that you had some influence over their educational journey. Furthermore, establishing deep relationships with students." Another teacher-respondent uttered, "Seeing students succeed." Finally, a teacher-respondent stated, "To see them learning through applications."

Challenges of Teachers

Challenges on Demand of Teaching. Challenges in the teaching profession are inevitable. The struggle for work-life balance and resource deficiencies in schools pose a significant hurdle, with teachers expressing concerns about inadequate support and resources. "The job needs time, responsibility, accountability, and commitment," a respondent said.

Challenges on Students Behavior and Students' Needs. Managing student behavior and the diverse needs of learners in the classroom are ongoing challenges, highlighting the complexities of maintaining order and addressing individual learning styles. A teacher-respondent said, "Disciplining the students," while another respondent stated, "The behavior of students." Addressing the needs of students inside the classroom challenges teachers on how they could adequately provide solutions to this. A heartfelt respondent stated, "Managing pupils' varied needs and talents in the classroom is one of the most difficult parts of being a teacher. Because every student has a different learning style, history, and set of obstacles, it can be challenging to meet everyone's needs properly. It can also be difficult to handle administrative duties control".

Challenges of Teachers on Work-Life Balance. Aside from teaching, teachers perform other duties, such as doing and submitting urgent reports. Such a scenario stresses teachers about what to do first: to teach or do school reports. The teacher's priority task is to teach; however, when students are not attending school, it is the teacher's duty to conduct home visitations, which entails a financial burden since teachers shell out money from their pockets to pay for transportation. A respondent shared an innermost sentiment: "The most challenging part would be balancing your work and personal life. Also seeing your school lacks things that students need or there is no support from the administration to further enhance learning environments for kids. If a school could

provide these things, that could make a difference and alleviate problems". Despite these difficulties, a common thread emerges – teachers find satisfaction in overcoming challenges, aiding their students in succeeding, and positively impacting their lives. In the dichotomy of challenges and rewards, the essence of teaching lies in resilience, fulfillment, and the transformative influence educators have on their students.

Teacher's Breakthroughs

Time Management. Teachers emphasize effective time management and self-care. They enhance their well-being by taking breaks, enjoying leisure activities, and spending time with loved ones, prioritizing family as a key focus outside of school. It highlights the importance of family and spending time together. Whether through travel or simply being together, family is a significant focus outside school. The consistent emphasis on time management underscores its critical role in balancing professional duties and personal life. Teachers actively strive to harmonize work and personal commitment by prioritizing tasks and scheduling specific times for different activities. Teachers advocate for intentional time management, as expressed in the statement, "Being intentional in time management, us, teachers, can achieve a healthier work-life balance, leading to greater fulfillment and well-being both inside and outside." Time management is crucial for achieving balance, showcasing how thoughtful time allocation contributes to personal and professional fulfillment.

Professional Development. Some teachers also allocate time to pursue graduate studies, emphasizing a commitment to professional development. This response highlights how individuals allocate their time beyond their professional responsibilities, providing insight into their priorities and activities.

Personal Development. Fostering positivity and supportive relationships are crucial for work-life balance. The advice to "focus on the positive vibes in the workplace and be with a group of friends that will uplift you." highlights the power of a positive mindset and community. Equally important is the call to "make sure to balance your personal and work life by taking a break when needed. Your weekend must be your relax day and chill day; don't spend it doing school-related work." This advice underscores the necessity of intentional balance, urging teachers to dedicate weekends to personal pursuits and relaxation rather than constant work-related activities.

Stress Management. In every difficulty and challenge, a teacher must know how to handle the stress that comes with it. A respondent stated, "I just eat with comfort food, spaghetti, and go to a travel, even just in a mall or a market." Similarly, one of them said, "Travel. Read books. Watch series on Netflix. Talk to friends and family." Another respondent said, "Travel and vacation with the family." Conversely, a respondent said, "I don't take it seriously. Just go with the flow. Do my job properly." Lastly, one stated, "As a teacher, I alleviate stress by doing adventure outside the school and establishing clear

boundaries in my life and work balance." For these teachers, there is one activity they all have in common to alleviate stress from the challenges of their profession: Travel.

Travel. Given that teachers utilize travel to alleviate stress, teachers must develop effective strategies to manage their workload and schedule travel breaks during school breaks, holidays, and extended weekends to minimize disruptions and stress.

Traveling enabled the respondents to be refreshed. "It relieves my stresses, tiredness, and dullness. And it refreshes me so I can start working again," shares another teacher. "It gives me new energy, inspiration, and motivation to do more at work," exclaims a teacher. "To the point that it improves how I perform at work," stated a teacher, underscoring the tangible benefits of these adventures. A remarkable teacher-respondent response said, "A motivated and happy teacher could resonate optimism and positivity to learners. It can influence them to study and learn in an enjoyable and safe environment."

To other respondents, traveling allowed them to become learned. "In traveling, you have to be aware of the things that you do, just like in the workplace. Respect your workmates and be aware of your character," said one teacher, drawing parallels between international travel and workplace etiquette. Also, "This story is what I always tell my students since we are talking about discrimination and other contemporary issues," a respondent said. "Whenever I traveled abroad, I got to experience the cultures and traditions of that country. From that, I can share what I learned and experienced with my students," explains a teacher who weaves travel tales into world literature lessons. A respondent had also shared, "I involved my students through storytelling and cultural insights, especially if it has something to do or connection in our lesson." Travel experiences become real-world lessons, fostering understanding and empathy for social issues and broadening their perspectives creating a richer learning experience.

As teacher-travelers, respondents have passionately advocated traveling, saying, "I advise them to make savings and go on a trip while you can. Traveling is not about living a luxurious life, but it's about having time for yourself to be rejuvenated from the stresses that you have encountered in your workplace." This compelling advice underscores the transformative potential of travel as a form of self-care, emphasizing its role in rejuvenation and cultural enrichment. Another teacher keenly observes, "If they are experiencing fatigue and stress from work that would be a sign for them to get out and travel or even take a day off or vacation or staycation maybe." Here, acknowledging fatigue and stress becomes a pivotal cue for teachers to prioritize self-care, advocating for breaks—through travel or days off—as essential components of overall well-being.

DISCUSSION

Success of Teachers

Teaching as the Noblest Profession. Teaching, being the noblest profession, is dreamt of by many. Despite the herculean tasks it entails, many are still seeking to join this profession. Fauza et al. (2020) stated that society's perception of the teacher's profession is composed of the following components: ability, code of ethics, autonomy, and specialized knowledge, which play an essential role in the teachers' quality of instruction.

Teachers are Valued by Students. One of the happiest moments in a teacher's life is when students remember their teachers. The joy is felt when students come back to you and thank you for all the good deeds you have done for them when they were under your care.

Seeing Students Succeed in Life. The success of teaching is seen when students have achieved their goals and dreams. It brings a kind of emotion that is hardly explained by seeing students' faces on social media and tarpaulins indicating the profession they have passed and acquired. Truly, a teacher can say that they were once a part of the success of the student's life. Rubi (2019) revealed that the teachers' professional values and relationships with peers, classroom environment, and personal proficiency are well-developed. Accordingly, the students' development is also well-developed. The implication is that the professional values of the teachers affect the students' development. The positive assessment of the teachers towards themselves, their jobs, and their work environment indicates that students are likely to develop accordingly.

Challenges of Teachers

Challenges on Demand of Teaching. Teaching is demanding, requiring dedication and passion. Teachers face challenges like classroom management and limited resources, including internet access and facilities. According to Nemenzo (2018), teachers encounter difficulties in lesson planning, lack personal laptops, and face various obstacles such as insufficient computers, large class sizes, and unsupportive parents. Other challenges include enforcing rules, dealing with absenteeism, bullying, and student disinterest, among others.

Challenges on Students Behavior and Students' Needs. Teachers face significant challenges in addressing student behavior, which disrupts quality teaching time. Camba (n.d.) outlines these challenges, including rule violations, disrespect, deceitfulness, noncompliance, bullying, aggression, and theft, among others.

Challenges of Teachers on Work-Life Balance. One of the most difficult challenges teachers faced was balancing their work and life. Most often, teachers are consumed by their work.

Teacher's Breakthroughs

Teachers find their breakthroughs by managing their time efficiently, attending professional development, pursuing personal development, managing stress, and going on travel.

Time Management. Teachers' time management enables them to be productive in their teaching work and outside school activities. Teachers are encouraged to plan activities beyond school carefully so as not to compromise their teaching. Olivo (2021) explained that teachers should keep up with their positive teaching performance by having the same passion and commitment toward work. They must continue providing most of their time in school to classroom instruction to produce pupils imbued with correct values, knowledge, skills, and competence. They must embrace the challenge of the work responsibilities inherent to being a teacher. Teachers practiced good time management because they allotted more time to classroom teaching and preparations for their core tasks as teachers.

Professional Development. Post-graduate studies may provide teachers with new knowledge and wisdom to become more energetic teachers. Abdurab (2023) highlighted effective teacher professional development methods for 21st-century education and emphasized the positive impact of such techniques and approaches on the growth and development of teachers in an era characterized by rapid technological advancements and changing educational paradigms.

Personal Development. Nurturing personal development is achieved when teachers find time to relax and give teachers the laxity to do away with paperwork on the weekends. Herman (2020) elucidated that teachers first learned about personal development in the workplace, and most chose to take part in courses to achieve their personal development. Many respondents prefer personal development groups, books, and websites.

Stress Management. Teachers' stress management was seen through eating, traveling, going to the mall or market, reading books, watching series on Netflix, and going on vacation with family. Oguntimehin and Abolaji (2019) revealed that stress negatively affected teachers' productivity and the teaching profession. The study also provides some strategies to reduce stress in our educational institutions. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the government employ more teachers to ease teachers' workload and job-related stress. There should be educational programs and recreation facilities for teachers that can minimize the consequences of stress.

Travel. Teachers' travel activities have become a form of teacher breakthrough nowadays. Traveling enabled teachers to relieve their stress, tiredness, and dullness of life. Traveling refreshed them to perform their work with eagerness and recharged energy. It also gave teachers inspiration, power, and motivation to perform better. Ospina and Medina (2020) explained a wide range of benefits of the impact of international visiting faculty's teaching experiences, suggesting that the participants adapted to new lifestyles, became more mature, obtained a deeper understanding of themselves, reaffirmed their educational values and philosophies, raised cultural awareness, became more flexible, and developed attitudes that involved tolerance and respect.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research shed light on teachers' successes, such as seeing teaching as the noblest profession, teachers being valued by their students, and being a part of students' success in life. It is also important to consider teachers' challenges, focusing on the demands of teaching, students' behavior and needs, and teachers' balance between work and life.

As shared by dedicated educators, the breakthroughs in achieving work-life balance were centered on time management, professional development, personal development, stress management, and travel.

Based on the results, it is recommended that school leaders review teaching philosophies with teachers, enhance celebrations of Teachers' Day, and strengthen alum organizations for homecoming activities to foster the relationships of the graduates with their former teachers. Given the heavy demand for teaching, it is suggested that school heads provide breaks to alleviate teacher stress. Additionally, to address rising discipline issues, teachers should discuss the student discipline manual with parents to aid in its implementation. To support teachers in maintaining a work-life balance, it is important for school heads, and policymakers to encourage camaraderie, foster a positive work environment, and offer recreational days.

For teachers to achieve breakthroughs, school heads are encouraged to support them in their endeavors for professional and personal development. Stress management workshops or seminars may be given to teachers to alleviate their stress. Most of all, school heads and policymakers must also support and encourage the provision of travel for teachers.

IMPLICATIONS

This study has broad implications for teaching and educational policy. Acknowledging travel as a widely favored stress-relief method among teachers, schools can support staff by facilitating travel breaks with minimal disruption to learning.

Fostering a positive work culture that values diverse methods of rejuvenation, including travel, can strengthen the teaching community.

Policymakers should designate a dedicated day each month for teacher recreation to promote well-being and a healthy work-life balance. This acknowledges the importance of self-care and aligns with the modern view of teaching as a holistic commitment needing periodic rejuvenation. School administrators can implement these recommendations, advocate for teacher well-being, and create an environment that values professional dedication and personal rejuvenation. This initiative aims to transform how society perceives and supports educators, recognizing their multifaceted roles and essential needs for holistic well-being.

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DECLARATIONS

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in the research conducted in this study.

Informed Consent

By ethical guidelines, informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement in this study. Participants were provided with clear information

regarding the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of participation, and their voluntary consent was obtained before data collection commenced.

Ethics Approval

The research design ensures that the study involves minimal risk to participants. According to the special rules or exemptions for ethical approval in educational research studies, it has been established that this study does not need formal ethics approval.

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