


# **Narratives Behind Teaching: The Lived Experiences of Veteran English Teachers**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences and personal stories of veteran English teachers in their career journey. The study employed a narrative inquiry qualitative research design. Eight (8) veteran English teachers were purposively chosen through a snowball purposive sampling until saturation was reached. The criteria include English teachers in Cebu who have been teaching for at least 20 years and are aged 50 and above. The lived experiences were explored through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions sufficient to address the research questions of this study. Data gathered were coded, categorized, and analyzed thematically through the Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. To uphold ethical standards, informed consent was secured and names of participants were kept confidential. The study revealed that intrinsic factors such as the teachers' passion and commitment, dedication, flexibility, and resilience enable them to stay in the teaching profession longer. Educational institutions are recommended to strengthen mentorship and continuous professional development, enhance policies on incentives and rewards, provide long-term technology training, and promote teamwork and work-life balance among teachers.

## **RESUMO**

O estudo busca proporcionar uma compreensão aprofundada das experiências vividas e das histórias pessoais de professores veteranos de inglês ao longo de suas trajetórias profissionais. A pesquisa utilizou uma abordagem qualitativa de investigação narrativa. Oito (8) professores veteranos de inglês foram selecionados intencionalmente por meio de uma amostragem intencional em bola de neve até que a saturação fosse atingida. Os critérios de inclusão foram: professores de inglês em Cebu com pelo menos 20 anos de experiência docente e idade igual ou superior a 50 anos. As experiências vividas foram exploradas por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas, utilizando perguntas abertas suficientes para abordar as questões de pesquisa deste estudo. Os dados coletados foram codificados, categorizados e analisados tematicamente por meio da estrutura de análise temática de Braun e Clarke. Para garantir a conformidade com os padrões éticos, o consentimento livre e esclarecido foi obtido e os nomes dos participantes foram mantidos em sigilo. O estudo revelou que fatores intrínsecos, como a paixão e o comprometimento, a dedicação, a flexibilidade e a resiliência dos professores, permitem que eles permaneçam na profissão docente por mais tempo. Recomenda-se que as instituições de ensino fortaleçam a mentoria e o desenvolvimento profissional contínuo, aprimorem as políticas de incentivos e recompensas, ofereçam treinamento tecnológico de longo prazo e promovam o trabalho em equipe e o equilíbrio entre vida profissional e pessoal entre os professores.

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## **Introduction**

A teacher is never an ordinary person. Being one requires patience, perseverance, hard work, passion, and dedication. It entails a great power, at the same time a greater responsibility. Despite being a fulfilling profession, it is also one of the most tedious and least appreciated jobs. According to Anthony (2014), rewards, recognition, and acknowledgment of good and excellent work in this job are scarcely given. However, many still wished to join the growing number of teachers. While others leave this job for good due to the numerous paperwork, too much pressure, and stress, many have spent all their lives in this profession.

Veteran teachers are those who have been in the profession for many years. They are highly experienced teachers who offer teachable moments to the novice ones. Often, they symbolize wisdom and knowledge over the years, which is why many students look forward to having them as their teachers (Gwafwallner, 2017).

Research has been conducted globally to explain how veteran teachers managed to survive in their teaching careers and what challenges they faced along the way. In the Philippines, veteran teachers are called “seasoned” teachers, those who are about to retire in a few years. They are the pillars of the institution, at the same time, of education. The reasons why they stayed and the unforgettable experiences they have from being a novice to becoming an expert make their lived experiences interesting and worth studying.

Although studies exploring the lived experiences of teachers exist, relatively few studies specifically examine veteran English teachers and their personal stories. Locally, studies on the lived experience of teachers primarily focused on the beginning and Senior High School teachers. It is on this premise that this study examines the lived experiences of veteran English Teachers in Cebu.

The purpose of this study is to describe and provide an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the veteran English teachers through examining the factors that enabled them to stay in the teaching profession, their experiences as new and as an experienced teacher, their job satisfaction, their expertise as English Teachers, their surviving strategies to cope with the changing times, their achievements and challenges throughout their teaching career, and lastly, their plans after retirement.

### ***Related Literature and Studies***

Veteran teachers refer to those who have been teaching for a long time. They are highly experienced teachers who have seen every “new” initiative in education. They are those who have remembered differentiated instruction, backward design, and strengthening of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in classroom instruction. They are those teachers who understand students and know how to build a wonderful relationship with them. They understand that to do this, they have to create engaging and motivating lessons that encourage

collaboration and cooperation among their classmates. They offer to teach and mentor novice teachers and are willing to become their instructional coach (Gwafwallner, 2017).

Hargreaves (2005), as cited in Snyder (2017), defined veteran teachers as those who are among “later career” teachers who have more than 20 years of experience and are about to retire. They are considered experts and are treated with the utmost respect for the loyalty and commitment he/she has shown to the teaching profession. Huberman (1998) identified one distinguishing characteristic of veteran teachers as those who are near retirement.

In an article entitled “Working with Veteran Teachers: Advice to New Teachers”, Gress (2019) shares his experience with his veteran colleagues. He shared that the veteran teachers are an invaluable resource to the novice teachers, who are very willing to admit that they still have much to learn. Since veterans are experts, they are considered mentors and coaches of the new generation of teachers.

In a book entitled: “International Perspectives on Veteran Teachers” edited by Miriam Ben-Peretz and Gary McCulloh (2013), one remarkable study was conducted by Eilam (2008) where he discovered the three surviving strategies used by the veteran teachers, first, are those transforming teachers who adapt to change; second, are the non-transforming teachers who resist change; and lastly, teachers who move into new roles and “regenerate” themselves.

Other empirical studies on veteran teachers focused on the reasons for staying long in a certain institution and the motivation or demotivation factors affecting their decision whether to stay committed or not. These are found in the following studies.

Odanga et al. (2015) stated that married teachers, especially parents, may have difficulties with strategies in instruction but are better at classroom management. Moreover, the study of Chiong et al. (2017) found that teachers who have been teaching more than ten (10) years in England stayed due to perceived professional mastery and altruistic reasons, such as wanting to make a positive difference in the lives of their students.

Another study conducted by Carillo and Flores (2018) entitled “Veteran Teachers’ Identity: What does the research literature tell us?” revealed that veteran teachers develop their self-esteem through their professional competence and rely on intrinsic and extrinsic issues to maintain their motivation and commitment to teaching. This suggests that once a teacher gains experience, he/she becomes more competent, which boosts the teacher’s self-confidence. There could also be internal and external factors affecting their interest and commitment. Similarly, Eade (2018) argued that expertise comes with experience. Experience results in teachers internalizing and reflecting on the knowledge they have learned. It also implies their continuous improvement and adjustment to cater to the needs of their students.

Anthony (2014) in his study, “The Lived Experiences of Veteran Elementary Urban School teachers: Why and How they stay”, teaching career’s longevity depends on many factors

such as job satisfaction, work environment, career stages, and how teachers manage stress. Job satisfaction is considered one of the factors that makes teachers stay in an institution. He argued that those teachers who are satisfied with their job are happy and therefore decide to stay longer.

In addition, studies of Aguirre (2023) and Day and Gu (2009) found that despite the different backgrounds, subject areas, and teaching levels of the participants, they highlighted that the relationships they built with their students had a deep impact on their career retention. Besides these, students' academic advancements bear a positive impact on their job satisfaction and the sustainability of their careers. However, they need constant and multifaceted support. Their relentless adaptability is reflected in their boundless commitment to staying afloat amid the changing tides of the education world.

Job stability and the benefits as teachers are other reasons for teacher retention. The study of Aulia, N., & Haerani, I. (2023) revealed that fair pay and strong benefits are critical factors in keeping teachers in the profession. It highlights that offering competitive salaries and benefits not only leads to job satisfaction but also reduces turnover rates. Public school teachers in the Philippines receive monetary rewards for their hard work (Cueva, 2022).

In terms of job satisfaction, a study conducted by Admiraal et al. (2019) found that satisfied veteran teachers seem to attach importance to the quality of the relationship between them and their students. On the other hand, unsatisfied veteran teachers attribute their dissatisfaction to extrinsic factors like government policies.

In overcoming challenges in the profession, the study entitled "Retention and Motivation of Veteran Teachers" by Edwards (2003) found that veteran teachers felt more stressed at present than when they started teaching. Reasons for this include standardized testing and increased accountability. Family issues are also considered one of their stress contributing factors.

Other studies also tackle the challenges veteran teachers experienced. One of which is the study of Snyder (2017) on the Resistance to Change among Veteran Teachers. The study revealed that teachers' resistance to change includes social and Political Nostalgia. It was also revealed that veteran teachers are the most resistant to change. He concluded that veteran teachers respond to change differently for various reasons. Teachers who have been in the system find it hard to adjust most of the time when change is necessary. This results in the unsuccessful or delayed implementation of some educational reforms.

Lastly, the study of Gumiran et al. (2022) and Mokgolodi (2022) focused on the lives of the retired teachers. It was found that retired educators are good contributors to the educational system. They keep themselves involved and self-motivated by their goals and desires. They love imparting their knowledge and expertise even when they are already retired.

All the works of literature and studies mentioned are of great significance to the present study since it also investigates the lived experiences of veteran teachers. It further studies the factors influencing them to stay committed to the profession they have chosen, the challenges they encountered, and how they overcome them. However, the present study focuses specifically on the lived experiences of veteran English teachers and their career journey.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a narrative inquiry qualitative design to explore the lived experiences and personal stories of the eight veteran English teachers in their career journey. A narrative inquiry is a qualitative research design that focuses on personal stories and lived experiences to understand how veteran English teachers made sense of their lives and careers. It is completely derived from the data gathered and is generally characterized by collecting data and analysis simultaneously. Participants of the study were eight (8) veteran teachers identified through snowball purposive sampling. The saturation of data was reached when responses were repetitive, and no new themes, insights, or relevant information were produced. Criteria include English teachers in Cebu who have been teaching for at least 20 years and are 50 years old and above. The study is delimited to English teachers in Cebu province only, focusing on their qualitative narratives. It does not include novice teachers, other disciplines, and wider geographical areas. Through a one-on-one semi-structured interview, the teachers' experiences, motivations, and challenges were explicitly asked about. The interview guide is appended in this study (see Appendix A). The interview lasted for 30-45 minutes. Data were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis framework. The steps include familiarizing the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing the report.

Before the study was conducted, the researcher sought approval to conduct the study. After securing the participants' consent, the researcher, together with the participants, decided on a specific date, time, and venue to conduct the interview. The researcher assured them that the data would be held with the utmost confidentiality. When the point of saturation was reached. The data were transcribed, coded, categorized, and analyzed thematically. Before the paper was finalized, the results and data underwent member checking, where participants verified if the researcher processed the data accurately.

## **Results and Discussions**

This section presents a thorough discussion, interpretation, and analysis of the data collected from the research conducted.

### ***Demographic Profile***

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the participants.

**Table 1.**

## Veteran English Teachers' Demographic Background

Veteran Teacher	Age	Sex	Civil Status	No of Children	No of years teaching
Participant 1	58	F	Married	None	38
Participant 2	62	F	Married	2	43
Participant 3	60	M	Married	3	24
Participant 4	53	F	Married	4	34
Participant 5	59	F	Married	4	31
Participant 6	59	M	Married	7	34
Participant 7	57	F	Married	4	31
Participant 8	58	F	Married	9	33

The data shows that the veteran teachers' ages ranged from 53 to 62 years old. The majority of the participants are female, with 6 informants and only 2 male teachers. All of the teachers are married. All except veteran teacher 1 have children who range from 2 to 9. All informants have been teaching for more than 20 years. This shows that the participants are all qualified to be called veteran teachers, since Hargreaves (2005), as cited in Snyder (2017), defined veteran teachers as those who are among "later career" teachers having more than 20 years of experience and are nearing their retirement age.

The demographic profile helps inform their lived experiences in teaching. The years they spent in the profession allowed them to learn the intricacies of language instruction, classroom management, and coping mechanisms when faced with changes and challenges. Moreover, work and home situations may have shaped their experiences as teachers. Odanga et al. (2015) stated that married teachers, especially parents, may have difficulties with strategies in instruction but are better at classroom management. The study of Chiong et al. (2017) found that teachers who have been teaching more than ten (10) years in England stayed due to perceived professional mastery and altruistic reasons, such as wanting to make a positive difference in the lives of their students.

The lived experiences of veteran English teachers are influenced not only by their expertise but also by societal expectations. Issues related to their age, gender, and family complexities must be addressed for effectiveness and well-being.

### ***Narratives Behind Teaching***

In this study, the narratives behind teaching refer to the different experiences that the veteran English teachers went through, starting from the time they were novice teachers to being experts in their field. It also describes the different experiences that capture the reason behind staying in the profession, the challenges they faced, their job satisfaction, overcoming challenges, and plans after retirement. The themes that emerged from the data transcribed from the one-on-one interviews are the *journey from novice to expert, passion, commitment*

and job stability, test of loyalty and calling, overcoming challenges and fostering resilience, and embracing a new chapter after retirement.

### ***Journey from Novice to Expert***

When the veteran English teachers were asked to describe and narrate their experiences when they were new to the profession, most of them said that it was difficult. Some veteran teachers admitted that they had struggled when they were still novice teachers. They narrated that:

*“My experience before was not really nice. My mother wanted me to take up teaching. I took up BSED. I was not so much interested in my subjects.” (P1)*

*“It was very hard to teach during the early years. It was very tiring because I was a little bit of an idealist, serious of teaching, and I was influenced by the way of teaching in the seminary. My style in teaching was a lecture because of my training.” (P3)*

*“It was really very hard for me to adjust to my colleagues and, of course, to the policies of the school because it was a Chinese school.” (P4)*

*“I find it difficult because I was not prepared for that. It was difficult for the first two years; I cried a lot. What was the most difficult then in my years of teaching from 1998 to 1990 is that we had to make visual aids; I don't have any principles of how to make visual aids because we only learned that from education, and I am a BA in Communication graduate. (P5)*

While other teachers were struggling with the difficulties of being novice teachers, others had positive experiences in their first few years of teaching. Five participants shared that:

*“I like it because the school where I taught pays well.” (P1)*

*“Teaching was exciting back then.” (P2)*

*“It was easier then because it was teacher-centered.” (P6)*

*“It was very interesting to help students become mature enough as individuals.” (P7)*

*“Teaching in my early years was quite easy since it was more on teacher talk, and students just listened. There was less integration, and the lessons were focused more on reading, writing, and language skills. (P8)*

When asked to describe how different teaching is after many years in the profession, most of them said that it was a lot different because of the presence of technology. For most of them, using technology is difficult. However, they tried their best to adapt to it. This opposed the study of Snyder (2017), which revealed that experienced teachers resist change. In this study, teachers adapt to changes rather than resist them. Veteran teachers had also become experts in their field of specialization. They revealed that teaching became easier since they can already almost memorize everything that they have to teach. According to Eaude (2018),

expertise comes with experience. Experience results in teachers internalizing and reflecting on the knowledge they have learned. It also implies their continuous improvement and adjustment to cater to the needs of their students.

Most of the veteran English teachers revealed that teaching today has become so much augmented with technology. Some of the teachers tried their best to learn how to properly use them by asking for help from those who are more knowledgeable, like their student assistants and their children.

*“There was difficulty where advanced technology came in. I have to have student assistants. I need to have a classroom with a TV. But there are problems when the technology/devices don’t work. I have to adapt to the changes because I need them that’s why I need to have student assistants. (P1)*

*“I think the difference lies only in the dependence of technology in teaching, because 30 years ago, teachers were making a lot of audiovisual aids and now there are already available aids offered on the internet by the use of technology.” (P4)*

*“Teaching now is quite difficult for teachers of my age since ICT should be used and we are not computer literate.”(P8)*

*“I adapted the use of technology, but NOT fully. Not fully because in the computation of my grades, and in checking, especially essays and even objective tests, I still do it manually. I do not rely on zip grade and whatever.” (P4)*

Despite the difficulties in using technology, two veteran teachers believed that teaching is made easier these days because of technology. They expressed that:

*“Teaching was made easier by technology. You can just chat and give instructions online.”(P3)*

*“It was easier, much easier because you have all the techniques, strategies, you can be flexible, have a lot of learning contracts, you can have technology, you just give them the template, what to do, what are the criteria, you assign a mayor, and for me that makes things easy on my part.” (P5)*

Aside from the presence of technology, the teachers’ pedagogical strategies were also updated, and the subject matter was mastered. Changes in the students’ behavior and attitude are also observed. Veteran teachers said that:

*“Today, it is learner- centered with the use of modern technology.” (P6)*

*“More knowledge or Mastery of the lesson. You’ll eventually get tired of it because the lessons are repeated. I became a facilitator.” (P3)*

*There was a big difference after 31 years in my profession in students’ attitudes. They were too engaged in the use of technology” (P7)*

*“Now, students are easy to engage. They are more prepared and advanced. Exposing knowledge, they become more advanced. Although the students are generally well-behaved, they lack orientation on how to consider other people when passing the corner.” (P3)*

After 20 or more years of teaching, the veteran teachers have become experts in their field of English Language Teaching. Three of them became experts in production skills such as speaking and writing; two became experts in teaching grammar and effective use of the English Language in communication, and three became experts in teaching strategies. Gress (2019) shared that veteran teachers are an invaluable resource to novice teachers who are very willing to admit that they still have much to learn. Since veterans are experts, they are considered mentors and coaches of the new generation of teachers.

The teachers' journey from novice to expert reflects overcoming challenges in their early years of teaching, developing expertise, and adapting to changes. This highlights that continuous growth and flexibility are needed to become experts in the field of teaching. Academic institutions should promote and support mentoring opportunities and continuous professional development among teachers.

### ***Passion, Commitment, and Job Stability***

Choosing a job is one of the most complicated decisions people make, since it determines whether they will stay longer. When the veteran teachers were asked about why they stayed in the profession for more than 20 years, most of them answered that it was because of their passion and commitment to the teaching profession. According to the participants:

*“I stayed in the teaching profession because of my passion to teach the young.” (P1)*

*“At first, it was for personal and family needs. Along the way, I realized that it is a calling. Even up to now, I cannot imagine myself not in the classroom or not teaching.” (P4)*

*“When I grew older, I realized that it is not about economic consideration anymore. That means I enjoyed my work.” (P5)*

*“My commitment to my teaching profession made me stay for 31 years.” (P7)*

*“My love, commitment, and dedication as a teacher made me stay as a teacher.” (P8)*

The findings aligned with the study of Anthony (2014), which also found that there were many factors influencing the longevity of teachers in the profession; two main reasons are the passion for teaching and working with children. They drew on personal strategies to cope with stress and prevent themselves from experiencing burnout. Moreover, teachers' role in the classroom is to impart knowledge to students. Veteran teachers expressed that their love for

imparting their knowledge made them stay teaching until the present time. Five of the participants said:

*“I love sharing my knowledge and letting my students apply it in their own lives” (P1)*

*“I stayed because of my love for imparting knowledge to students”. (P2)*

*“I enjoyed my work because I could share what I have and what I learned. I can share my expertise, my talents, and skills with many students”. (P5)*

*“I stayed for 34 years for the love of sharing one’s knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to shape a better society for the next generation.” (P6)*

*“My love, commitment, and dedication as a teacher made me stay as a teacher.” (P8)*

The reasons behind the veteran English teachers’ retention in the profession are also studied by Aguirre (2023). The study found that despite the different backgrounds, subject areas, and teaching levels of the participants, they highlighted that the relationships they built with their students had a deep impact on their career retention. Besides these, students’ academic advancements bear a positive impact on their job satisfaction and the sustainability of their careers. However, they need constant and multifaceted support. Moreover, Day and Gu (2009) studied commitment and resilience of veteran teachers and found that teachers in their third and fourth decades of teaching most frequently occupy leadership positions, have witnessed large-scale policy and social change. Their relentless adaptability is reflected in their boundless commitment to staying afloat amid the changing tides of the education world.

On the other hand, working to earn a living for money is vital to surviving. It is one of the primary reasons why people stay or leave a job. Aside from earning a huge amount of money, stability is also very important when landing a job. In most cases, people tend to be drawn to jobs that make them feel secure. Veteran teachers mentioned:

*“I know that when it comes to the salary, a high or competitive salary depends on the rank, which means it depends on how you build your career.” (P3)*

*“It was for personal and family needs. I need a job to support my family.” (P4)*

*“Of course, I’ll be true to myself. I would say that it is because of economic considerations.” (P5)*

*“I think teaching is the most secure job or employment, that’s why I stayed. Unlike the journalists, there were many who lost their jobs. I considered the stability of work or employment. I’ve been to different workplaces, but still, those jobs I had are not stable.” (P3)*

Moreover, being a teacher and a government employee entails some benefits of employment. Veteran teachers 3 and 4 narrated:

*“I stayed in the profession because of the government benefits I enjoy. That’s why I made sure to be hired in a SUC.” (P3)*

*“Personally, when you are in the teaching profession, you become more intelligent because you keep on reading, and reading, and reading. Just like a seminar, you need to have a schedule when you study.” (P4)*

Aulia, N., & Haerani, I. (2023) indicate that fair pay and strong benefits are critical factors in keeping teachers in the profession. It highlights that offering competitive salaries and benefits not only leads to job satisfaction but also reduces turnover rates. Overall, it is worth considering how financial and benefit-related incentives affect teacher retention. Teachers who feel they are compensated, even in comparison to their peers, are less likely to leave teaching. In the Philippines, public school teachers receive clothing allowance, mid-year and year-end bonuses, performance-based bonuses, and other benefits as monetary rewards designed to compensate the hard work of educators and encourage them to remain in the field (Cueva, 2022).

The veteran teachers' reasons for staying vary. Some opted to stay because they simply needed a job. Others, on the other hand, had deeper and more personal reasons, such as the passion and commitment to teaching, influence of the family, love for imparting knowledge, consideration for a stable job, salary, money matters, benefits, and teachers' good reputation. Among these reasons, most of the teachers stayed because of their love and commitment to the teaching profession.

These collectively imply that passion, commitment, and a strong sense of purpose are key factors in retaining experienced teachers. While the increasing pay and benefits matter, what sustains them in the profession is their dedication to helping students. With this, institutions should create a work environment that is supportive and purpose-driven. Policies should be established with regard to rewards and incentives.

### ***Test of Loyalty and Calling***

When the veteran teachers were asked whether they had thought of or tried leaving the teaching profession, it was revealed that five (5) of them never thought of leaving. Most of their reasons for not leaving are because of their love for the job, their dream, their way of living, and their personal choice to retire as a teacher. Two participants said:

*“No, I just love what I’m doing. Though I am stressed, maybe if it is your love, you still want to teach.” (P1)*  
*“Never in my mind because this is my dream, and has been a dream to become a teacher.” (P2)*

However, three (3) of them have tried to quit or have thought of leaving for a greener pasture. One wanted to start a business, while the other also wanted to work abroad to earn more. The most common reason why they tried or thought of leaving was their low or not enough salary. They answered:

*“Yes, in my tenth year, I was thinking of engaging in business. In fact, I had a store built for me. During the summer, I started selling, but along the way, I also applied for a teaching job as a backup. I was resolved then because I was burned out during the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> year of being a teacher.” (P4)*

*“Yes, I had in 2004. Because my salary was too low during that time, and the trend before was to go abroad. (P5)*

*“There was a time that I wanted to leave the teaching profession for greener pastures. But I chose to stay.” (P6)*

Job satisfaction of veteran English teachers may be reflected in their achievements. These include students' success, high evaluation from the students, contribution to the school, being recognized and awarded, being a catalyst of change, and being recognized by the students as part of their success. According to Anthony (2014), job satisfaction is considered one of the factors that makes teachers stay in an institution. He argued that those teachers who are satisfied with their job are happy and therefore decide to stay longer.

Though low salary led teachers to think about leaving, students' success, recognition, and satisfaction strengthened their commitment. This shows that loyalty to teaching is strongly influenced by the teacher's sense of calling and fulfillment more than extrinsic motivation. Institutions may reinforce their recognition system, which improves teachers' sense of fulfillment.

### ***Overcoming Challenges and Fostering Resilience***

Veteran English teachers have gone through many challenges. These challenges include emotional challenges, problems with the administration, teaching problems, conflicts with colleagues, and financial problems, which become their stressors at work.

Emotional baggage emerged from the many times some of the teachers get disappointed and angry with students who misbehave or have fallen short of their expectations. Problems with the administration refer to the changing of decisions and simply not liking the administrator for some reason. Moreover, most of the veteran English teachers revealed that they also have experienced many challenges in teaching. Teaching students to love grammar, students' misbehavior, and absenteeism, and having too many classes and subjects to teach were only a few of their teaching problems. Veteran English teachers expressed that:

*“My greatest challenge is how to make my students love grammar. Students are very good at social media, but they struggle with grammar. (P3)*

*“There are also students who are not disciplined and who are very mean.” (P4)*

*“I had a problem with my students who cut classes and had issues with absenteeism due to online gaming. (P7)*

*My greatest challenge when I was requested to teach temporarily in a newly opened high school in an integrated*

*high school in our barangay. I need to teach a grade 7 class of 48 students, handling the 8 subject areas.*  
(P8)

Conflicts with colleagues are another challenge. One of the veteran English teachers said that it is difficult to handle colleagues who do not understand her and whose values contradict hers. Another problem concerning this is professional jealousy, where there were people who would feel threatened when one is favored or given positions by the administrators.

Financial problems have been one of the stressors of teachers. Some of them have become problematic in the past because of having a very low salary. In fact, a veteran teacher shared:

*“When I came here, my salary was only 10 thousand. Because of this, I had to ask for help from my sister, who was working abroad. She gave me 5 thousand pesos every month for one year.”* (P5)

To manage these challenges, veteran English teachers chose to be with family and people they love; laugh it out, spend time for themselves, and be with friends. They shared that:

*“My husband makes me feel good. Being with him, my stress is released.”* (P1)

*“I have my family. At the end of the day, when I am down and out. I have a lot of experience, with that I have some conflicts with colleagues and the administrators. I think the difficulties at work will be lighter when you go home with your family.”* (P4)

*“Laughing as often as possible, even at the very corny joke. Take things lightly. Laugh it off.”* (P3)

*“I manage my stress by going somewhere. I log in to my social media, like Facebook, on my account. I look at the pictures there and remember my experiences. I make sure I have “me” time.”* (P5)

*“A huddle with fellow teachers after class once in a while and a little drink with friends on holidays.”* (P6)

*“I manage stress by talking to my co-teachers, sharing our experiences every day, we also share jokes as well as problems, more on financial and sometimes personal.”* (P8)

Managing stress and challenges in the workplace is vital to surviving in the workplace. Coping mechanisms may vary depending on the person. From the veteran English teachers' responses, it was evident that the support and love of the family, friends, and care for the self is important.

Agyapong et al. (2022) found in their study that stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression are correlated to demographic factors such as sex, age, and marital status, as well as school and work-related factors such as years of teaching, class size, job satisfaction, and subject taught. Pointing out these factors implies the extent of the challenges faced by teachers.

School-based awareness programs and initiatives are needed to identify early signs to make sure that teachers avoid stress and prioritize well-being.

When the veteran English teachers were asked about their survival strategies, they shared varied devices such as taking work lightly, doing self-reflection, having good work ethics, being competitive, loving what they do, putting God first before anything else, being flexible, and never stopping from learning. They advised that:

*“Do self-reflection. Give yourself time to reflect through inspiring books...and love what you do.” (P1)*

*“Have good work ethics. One should have the right values. Being honest even when others are not, believing and being your truest self, considering individual differences, respecting others, observing lines of duty, and keeping your reputation clean.” (P2)*

*“Be Competitive. Teachers should not only work for the sake of working...you have to work excellently.” (P3)*

*“Be flexible. You have to compromise when there is a need to do so. You adapt to change but have to understand its purpose.” (P4)*

*“You should know how to balance life and work and adjust if changes are happening in the workplace. You cannot avoid this. In my experience, you cannot please everyone, so better be prepared to adjust to people.” (P7)*

*“You have to take work lightly. Have time to enjoy from time to time. Avoiding stress from too much pressure does not mean you are not doing well in your job. Overworking does not always mean you have been doing well in your job.” (P5)*

*“Put God first. He solves all problems that will come your way if you trust Him.” (P6)*

*“Continue learning. Pursue further studies if you can. Teachers have to go back to school, re-educate themselves, and continue learning. With this, you will always have something to impart to your students, just like what the old saying says: “One cannot give what he does not have.” (P8)*

Veteran English teachers’ advice includes strong work ethics, competitiveness, flexibility, work-life balance, stress management, spiritual grounding, self-reflection, and continuous learning. These contribute to teachers’ effectiveness and resilience, resulting in staying in the profession for more than 20 years. Research shows that engaging in reflective practice can improve your teaching effectiveness; adhering to ethics and ethical conduct will foster trust and credibility. Staying focused on continuous improvement and flexibility keeps it competitive in a dynamic educational environment. Balancing personal and professional life, stress management, and spirituality act as protective factors against burnout. Lastly, ongoing professional development ensures that educators are up to date and highly skilled to enhance the student journey. All of these strategies contribute to a satisfying and meaningful teaching career (Farell, 2022; Pellegrino & Hamilton, 2012; Robinson, 2023)

The data suggest that navigating emotional, institutional, and instructional problems develops teachers' resilience. Adaptive strategies in coping with these challenges, which reinforce their commitment and effectiveness, are necessary to sustain themselves. Academic institutions may support teachers by creating programs and conducting training that help promote their overall well-being.

### ***Embracing a New Chapter After Retirement***

Passion for teaching is one of the reasons why five of the participants planned to continue teaching in the Graduate School or become consultants after retirement. One planned to pursue further studies and teach law in other universities. They shared that:

- "If I am retiring, I will continue with the Graduate School. I still like to teach. I learn when I teach." (P1)*  
*"I will not stop teaching. I'll continue and preferably become a consultant in solving problems of students, and manning a school or department." (P2)*  
*"I will still teach part-time, like once a week, in the graduate school." (P4)*  
*"If there are opportunities to teach, I will. And since I am finishing Law, I would like to graduate, take the bar, and have some private practice." (P5)*

When asked to share their plans not related to teaching, some also shared that they would live a simple life with their families. Some planned to travel to places with their loved ones. They narrated:

- "I'll be with my husband anywhere he goes, and with God's blessing, we will live longer." (P1)*  
*"I would travel. Visit my "pariente" (relatives), visit my sister in America. I would also like to write." (P5)*  
*"Be a happy private citizen. I will go back to my former "love farming, "love interest" the province, painting, and so much writing, of course." (P3)*  
*"I will be in the countryside. I will go back to living simply without all the hustle and bustle of city life. We'll have a little farm, we'll have animals, live a simple life, and eat vegetables. Simple future, simple person." (P4)*

Others want to engage in business or invest. One of them planned to serve the Lord.

- To be a catechist and an active participant in church activities. Invest and do business. (P6)*  
*I will also do business. (P3)*  
*I plan to invest my money wisely. (P7)*  
*My plan after retirement is to invest in a small business in which I can still earn money for a living and to help my children live a good life. (P8)*

Retirement is a major transitional milestone for teachers as they look to explore personal interests and, for some, to continue involvement in education. Studies and reports describe various paths into part-time teaching, mentoring, or even entirely new endeavors.

Even after retirement, veteran English teachers still wanted to earn a living for themselves and their families. It implies how teachers value their families. They do not want to become a burden to them. However, if given a chance, they would live simply in their provinces with their loved ones. Engaging in business is another way to earn money despite not being able to work anymore.

Mokgolodi, H.L. (2022) found that retired educators of Botswana strongly disagree with the idea that a retiree is a liability and cannot contribute to a system's advancement. Retired teachers often want to stay involved. Mentoring and reflective forums are some ways retired educators are engaged in career development. Moreover, a study on the life of Filipino teachers after retirement conducted by Gumiran et al. (2022) revealed that teachers after retirement become self-motivated and driven by their own goals and desires. They manage to stay positive and love to connect with people. They experience sadness sometimes, but they refuse to live in grief. A lot of them love being part of a group and imparting their knowledge and expertise. In retirement, they enjoy time with family, including grandchildren, and hobbies such as gardening.

Based on the teachers' narratives, retirement is viewed as a transition rather than the end, with teachers wanting to pursue new academic roles or choose a simpler life with family. This shows that their dedication to teaching and their pursuit of personal satisfaction greatly influence how they embrace their lives after retirement.

## **Conclusion**

The narratives of veteran English teachers reveal that intrinsic motivation, such as passion, commitment, dedication, flexibility, and resilience, makes them stay in the profession longer. Their strong sense of purpose and fulfillment are major factors in their decision to remain in the field. Their personal experiences reflect their growth from novice teachers to being veterans, highlighting their resilience. Managing and overcoming challenges are also viewed as important skills to survive and thrive in the teaching profession. Overall, the longevity in the teaching profession is rooted in the teachers' deep-seated commitment to their vocation.

It is recommended that educational institutions provide opportunities for mentorship and continuous professional development, strengthen policies on remuneration, and provide long-term technology training among teachers. Future research may explore broader contexts, such as larger samples from different regions or school types, and conduct comparative studies to determine differences and similarities in the lived experiences between novice and veteran English teachers. Studies may extend to other disciplines to examine the consistency of factors affecting teachers' retention.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Guide**

1. How would you describe your journey as an English teacher in your early years up to the present?
  - How did you find teaching when you were new to the profession?
  - How different is teaching now after staying for 20 years or more?
2. What made you stay in the teaching profession for many years?
  - What motivated you to stay in the profession for 20 or more years?
  - Have you ever thought of or tried leaving the teaching profession? What happened?
  - What benefits of being a teacher made you stay for so long?
3. What are your important achievements and expertise as an English teacher?
  - What do you consider your greatest achievement?
  - What has become your expertise?
  - How did you develop yourself through the years?
4. What challenges have you faced in your teaching career, and how did you cope with those problems?
  - What were the major challenges you experienced?
  - How did you manage stress and what coping mechanisms helped you overcome them?
5. What strategies sustained you in your teaching career, and what are your plans for the future?
  - What survival strategies helped you stay in your profession?
  - What are your plans after retirement?

Do you have anything to add? If yes, please tell me.

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