

# LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS IN FAR-FLUNG SCHOOLS

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**Abstract:** This phenomenological hermeneutics study aimed to describe the lived experiences of seven teachers in far-flung schools of Barangay Datal Anggas, Alabel 4, Alabel District, Division of Sarangani. A qualitative research design using a phenomenological hermeneutic approach was employed to delineate the views, feelings, and impact of teaching in far-flung schools. Seven participants underwent an in-depth interview to discover their lived experiences using Collaizzi's Method in analyzing the data. The data gathered were categorized into three themes: meaningful life of the teachers in a far-flung school, positive feelings towards work, and passionate teachers: a sense of satisfaction and commitment. Indeed, teaching in a far-flung school is not an easy task. These require passionate and committed teachers to provide much-needed services. Amidst their challenging experiences, teachers found joy and enthusiasm to work harder since the people in the community were hospitable and amiable. Thus, staying in their school became a fruitful and satisfying experience.

**Keywords:** Lived experiences, teachers, far-flung schools, phenomenological hermeneutic approach, Philippines.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' lived experiences in far-flung public schools can take several forms. The data of the Department of Education for the consolidated Individual Performance Commitment Review Form (IPCRF) report for the school year 2017-2018 revealed a 73% "Outstanding" performance level, which is 2% below the national target. Almost 65% of the teachers in far-flung schools, as shown in the Division Office of Sarangani data, seek to transfer to another school in the lowlands, and its root cause was traced from their lived experiences in their working stations.

Experiences play a vital part in our daily lives. As working professional teachers, we all go through life progressions, and each person has their way of dealing with their lived experiences. The dangerous battle of experienced teachers as individuals is scrap inside the classroom and in human hearts. They struggle with fear, disappointments, stress, a lack of self-confidence, feelings of incompleteness, dependency, and the inability to cope with the conditions in their daily lives. While these experiences and challenges can defeat everyone, they can also catalyze enhancement in preparation for the promising development in the cognitive, spiritual, social, personal, and understanding of one's professional opportunities and trials (Bilbao, 2012).

### 1.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on McClelland's (1985) theory of needs. He proposed the need of achievement theory which states that it is required over time through a person's specific needs one's life experiences. Individuals who are driven by necessities for achievement usually have a strong desire to set up challenging objectives and accomplish them. Their preference is to

work in a results-oriented work environment and always appreciate any feedback on their work. Achievement-based individuals take calculated risks to reach their goals and may circumvent both high-risk and low-risk situations. They often prefer working alone. This personality type believes in a hierarchical structure derived primarily from work-based attainments.

Another theory was the theory of Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy. This is concerned with the abilities of individuals to control their function over the things that affect their lives. This influences life choices, level of motivation, resilience to adversity, and vulnerability to stress and depression. He explains how self-efficacy positively affects all facets of the human experience. The key to superiority is approaching life with constant efforts and experimenting with realistic but challenging goals. Easy success with little effort can lead us to expect rapid results, which can, in turn, make us easily discouraged by failure. Experiencing failure is imperative so that we can build persistence in it. This is done by handling every failure as a learning opportunity and a chance to reach competence with a different strategy. He added that the most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences. People are easily disheartened since they experience easy success and expect quick results. A resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through non-stop effort. Some setbacks and hardships in human pursuits serve a useful purpose in teaching that success usually requires constant strength. After people become persuaded, they have what it takes to succeed. They keep up in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks. By sticking it out through tough times, they emerge stronger from difficulty.

Expectancy Theory of Vroom (1964), as cited in Estes et al., (2012), mentioned that people act according to their perceptions that their work efforts lead to actual performances and outcomes and how much they value the results. The expectancy theory suggests the three elements determine an individual's work motivation. First, effort-performance relationship expectancy is the individual's belief that a particular level of performance will follow a certain level of effort. Second, the performance-reward relationship instrumentally refers to the degree to which an individual believes that a specific group of performance will achieve the desired outcome. The third is reward-personal goals relationship valence is the value or importance an individual attaches to various work outcomes. Each result has an associated valence or value.

Certainly, far-flung/rural education is very challenging and rewarding. This is a mainly hard time for the rural areas of the province. The rural areas have always endured harsh economic conditions and have somehow survived. Many far-flung educators struggle daily to provide quality learning experiences in communities under siege. One thing is clear, many ignore this situation and its impact on education and schooling in a province, and this would be a peril to us.

Additionally, teachers assigned to far-flung schools can exercise professional chances and defies include the viewpoints and values that will assist students in finding harmony, confidence, and fulfillment, not feeling defeated by their fear, frustration, pressure, or hopelessness but to be a vanquisher. Not everyone grows up to have an innate sense of high self-esteem or worthiness. Every person has those rough nights and days, negative moods, or being tired.

Hence, to travel the road of becoming an effective teacher, everyone has their own experiences to tell along with one's journey of practicing the profession toward success. Teachers in far-flung schools should have the knowledge, positive attitudes, values, and skills about teaching strategies.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to describe the lived experiences of seven teachers in selected far-flung schools in Barangay Datal Anggas, Alabel 4 District, Alabel, Sarangani Province.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do the participants describe their experiences as teachers in the far-flung areas?
  - 1.1 How do teachers view teaching in far-flung schools?
  - 1.2 How do teachers feel teaching in far-flung schools?
  - 1.3 How these experiences give an impact on the teaching profession?

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 The Rationale for Qualitative Approach

The study was phenomenology-hermeneutics in design. It documented the stories of teachers teaching in far-flung schools. It also noted their views, feelings, and impact on their teaching. In this research, phenomenological hermeneutics is employed because the researcher goes to a particular set of interests to collect the data, describes the usual location of the data source, and the researcher is the vital instrument. This research study collects data that includes interview transcripts, field notes, audio recordings, journals, personal comments, and anything else that can deliver the actual words or actions of the people concerned in the study. This qualitative research is an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a phenomenon (Creswell 2013).

Moreover, this would also be the most appropriate research methodology because the concern of the study is to know how people make sense of their lives. The researcher wants to know what the participants thought about their lived experiences in a far-flung school. The researcher focuses on the participants' expectations, causes, motives, objectives, and values about the experiences they encountered in their lives. The researcher will also try her best to capture the participants' perspectives as accurately as possible. It is emphasized that through phenomenology, special events that happened as participants included their experiences could be understood better through lengthy discussions. The researcher is interested to know how things happen as experienced by the teachers in far-flung schools and how they interpret these experiences and find meaning in these experiences.

In data gathering, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with the selected far-flung school teachers in the municipality of Alabel, Sarangani Province. To facilitate an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences and, if possible, the researcher used audio-video recordings of the interview to strengthen its validity and to get the necessary information at the same time to prevent biases.

As the researcher of this study, at the same time, a former teacher in one of the far-flung schools in Alabel, the phenomenology hermeneutics research design was chosen because it will provide information about the experiences of teachers in far-flung schools, which involves their feelings, views, motivational factors, challenges and perceived effects of the said experiences in their teaching profession.

### 2.2 Sample and Site

This study was conducted at the selected schools of Datal Anggas, Alabel, Sarangani Province. The participants comprised two males and five females who worked almost a year and above, whom the researcher chose through purposive sampling. The purposive sampling technique is nonrandom. The researcher agrees with what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the data by knowledge or experience.

This study focuses on homogenous sampling; this is a purposive sampling technique used to capture a whole viewpoint relating to the thing the researcher is interested in studying. This is a non-probability sampling method, and it occurs when the elements selected for the sample are based on the researcher's judgment. The researcher often believes that they can obtain a typical participant by using a sound decision, which will result in saving time and money. This sampling is suitable for qualitative studies, where the researcher is interested in the informants who have the best knowledge concerning the research topic (Creswell, 2013).

### 2.3 Access and Permission

Ethical consideration refers to protecting the participants' rights, obtaining permission content, and the institutional review process.

The researcher asked permission to access the research site and approval of study conduct from the higher authorities of Alabel District, Division of Sarangani. Upon its approval, the researcher distributed a consent letter to the participants. The participants were informed that they were free to refuse the researcher's invitation. When the participants agreed, their schedule was set, considering their availability. Furthermore, the participants were oriented to the process of interview and discussion, which made them aware of the confidentiality of their responses. The participants were also informed that the in-depth interview would be tape-recorded, audiotaped, noted, and transcribed by the researcher.

## 2.4 Data Gathering Strategies

The researcher gathered necessary data from the participants through an in-depth interview; thus, it created a semi-structured interview guide. Moreover, the researcher personally went to the school assignment of the participants and asked permission from the school head to allow her to conduct the study. Finally, the researcher asked for the consent of the participants to allow the recording of the in-depth interview with audiotape to make it more credible.

## 2.5 Data Analysis Approach

This study employed the Thematic Analysis approach in analyzing the data. The most common method of analysis in qualitative research is thematic analysis. It emphasizes identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (or "themes") within qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The data analysis in this research involves summarizing, collecting, and presenting the most significant features. It utilizes a semi-structured interview to facilitate an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences. The prepared interview guide ensures to obtain the same information from each informant. Then the face-to-face interview was done; the participants were encouraged to talk freely and tell their stories using their own words. At the end of each talk, the researcher reminded the participants of her second contact with them via telephone calls to confer on the study's findings and make sure that the results reflect their own experiences. The researcher asked for the consent of the participants to allow the recording of the in-depth interview with the audiotape to make it reliable. The following steps represent the Colaizzi process for phenomenological data analysis, as cited in Morrow et al. (2015). The first step is to read and re-read each transcript to obtain a general sense of the whole content. The second step is for each transcript; to extract significant testimonials that pertain to the phenomenon under study. On a separate sheet, statements will be recorded, noting their pages and line numbers. The third step is the meanings should be formulated from these significant statements. The fourth step is the acquired meanings should be sorted into categories, clusters of themes, and themes. The fifth step is that the findings integrate a detailed description of the phenomenon under research. A descriptive presentation of the complete explanation is presented as a narrative account. The researcher incorporated the emergent themes, theme clusters, and formulated meanings into the description to create the overall structure and ensure that the study contains the experience elements. The sixth step is the description of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon. Finally, the research participants should pursue validation of the findings to compare the researcher's descriptive outcomes with their experiences.

## 3. RESULT

**Table 1: The Views of Teachers Teaching in Far-Flung Schools**

Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
Views of Teachers in far-flung school 1. Stable and Permanent Job 2. The decision to work in the same workplace 3. Motivated by the learners' situation 4. Motivated by hardship allowance and students 5. Use of different teaching strategies 6. Struggles in motivating students. 7. Challenging, for they had difficulty in comprehension because of language difficulties/barrier 8. Students have different competencies, use specific board works, and effective individualized teaching. Adjust for students to learn through applying differentiated activities. 9. Poverty is the main problem encountered in schools. 10. Different languages 11. Problems were the retention skills of the students and the learning materials of multi-grade classes.	1. Permanency 2. Workplace 3. Motivation 4. Contextualized lesson 5. Challenges and Struggles 6. Individualized teaching 7. Impoverished 8. Different obstacles in learning: a language barrier, student retention, learning materials, absenteeism, child labor, unmanageable behavior, weather condition

<p>12.The problems were ABSENTEEISM and child labor, comprehension, and retention skills. They were translating English subjects to Bisaya or in their dialect/language.</p> <p>13.Unmanageable behavior, weather conditions, student's nutrition, lack of learning materials, and teachers</p> <p>14.Preparation of instructional materials in teaching.</p> <p>15.In guiding and helping students realize that education is the best weapon to survive.</p> <p>16.The road to Datal Anggas</p> <p>17.She has conducted financial literacy to educate 4P's and I.P.'s members.</p> <p>18.Making of contextualized instructional materials with translation</p> <p>19.One-on-one reading tutorial for those nonreaders as an intervention.</p> <p>20.Safe and protected by the parents in the community, they cared for the teachers in far-flung.</p> <p>21.Very safe, because of a buddy (husband or father) just extra cautious during travel.</p> <p>22.Unsafe because of flare-ups and chaos within the community and the different and anonymous people who come and go.</p> <p>23.At first, safe, but when the incidents happened, it was very alarming, and the place might be dangerous.</p> <p>24.Not safe; the road was muddy and skewed out.</p> <p>25.Enjoy different games/activities and outing nearby rivers.</p> <p>26.Even though it's not easy living in far-flung still enjoyable because of the students.</p> <p>27.Enjoy socializing and mingling with the people in the community.</p> <p>28.Happy and exciting when the community welcomed, accepted, and support the teacher</p> <p>29.Students serve as their inspiration; even teachers were far from their families.</p> <p>30.Inspired, happy, and fulfilled with the learnings of the students</p> <p>31.Students serve as inspiration and motivation.</p> <p>32.Inspired to teach learners to become literate and competent</p> <p>33.Inspired to produce professionals and to prepare learners to become competitive individuals</p> <p>34.The teacher needs dedication, and teaching is a mission/vocation. It's a fulfillment to become a teacher.</p> <p>35.Because of the hazard pay, the community loved the teacher.</p> <p>36.They can prepare materials and strengthens the relationship with the students, teachers, and the community.</p> <p>37.Can save money and the worthy environment</p> <p>38.Geographically far and risky to students when there's an activity in the lowlands</p> <p>39. When you are ill, it's distant from the hospitals.</p>	<p>9. Instructional Materials</p> <p>10. Behaviors towards study and values formation</p> <p>11. Access/roads to school</p> <p>12. Parental financial literacy</p> <p>13. Making of contextualized I.M.'s</p> <p>14. One-on-one reading tutorial</p> <p>15. Safe</p> <p>16. Chaos and misunderstanding within the community were inevitable and the presence of insurgents.</p> <p>17. Not safe</p> <p>18. Enjoyment in different activities</p> <p>19. Students as an inspiration</p> <p>20. Teaching as a mission/vocation</p> <p>21. Advantages: teachers receive hazard pay; they will learn the dialect of the community; they can save money, and lastly, it strengthens the relationship between the students, teachers, and the community.</p> <p>22. Disadvantages: the place was geographically far and risky for students and teachers, living away from home and hospitals, and burden for additional expenses</p>
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**Central Theme: A Meaningful Life of Teachers' in Far-flung Schools**

The teachers' perception revealed a meaningful life of teachers in far-flung schools that goes above and beyond the call of duty. Being the focal figure in education, the teachers must be competent and knowledgeable to impart the knowledge they

could give to their students. They also expect to recognize individual differences and adjust instructions that best suit the students. As educators, we play different and essential roles in teaching and learning. Participants in far-flung schools revealed that choosing the workplace involves two separate drives or motives.

#### ***A. Permanency and Workplace***

The first emergent theme that arose was teachers' work in far-flung areas, for it was the only means to have a permanent job. In support of the R.A. 4670 "The Magna Carta for Public School Teachers," Article II Sec 5 Tenure of Office means security on employment and tenure is assured to the teachers. Besides, public school teaching jobs were typically very secure because they were funded by the taxpayers (Philippines Republic Act No. 4670, 1966). On top of this, they often have strong unions that can offer advice and support if ever they run into difficulties at work. It could be pretty confident that public school teachers are part of a standardized system in which the workers' rights are well-protected. One more reason was to work in the same workplace with the husband. As cited in R.A. 4670, Article II Sec 11, married teachers in public schools be employed in the same locality (Philippines Republic Act No. 4670, 1966).

#### ***B. Motivation***

Participants in the study had arrived at two stand factors that motivated the teachers to teach in far-flung schools: encouraged by the learners' situation, that love of profession even goes to the extent of taking part of their inadequate salary for classroom use to provide learning and teaching materials for their learners and have a conducive learning environment to make the learning happen. Same with Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) idea that when individuals are intrinsically motivated, they are engaged in activities because they are interested in and enjoy their participation. According to Maslow, these needs can create internal pressures that influence a person's behavior. For example, a motivated person tends to be engaged, persist longer, have better learning outcomes, and perform better than those who do not (Pintrich, 2003). Another form of motivation was monetary grants, which helped them stay at the assigned station, as mentioned by participant 4. As reflected in R.A. 4670 Article III Sec 19, Special Hardship Allowances in areas in which the teachers struggle in commuting to their station of employment, they will be compensated with special hardship allowances equivalent to at least twenty-five percent of their monthly salary (Philippines Republic Act No. 4670, 1966).

#### ***C. The contextualized lesson, challenges, and struggles, individualized teaching***

The daily teaching experiences of teachers in far-flung schools revealed different scenarios: diverse learners need a contextualized lesson, exciting but full of struggles and challenges, and in addressing varied students' learning competencies, the specific board works, individualized teaching. Supported by Barberos, Gozalo, and Padayogdog (2018), teachers must acknowledge the diversity in the classroom; ethnicity, gender, culture, language abilities, and interests. Getting students to work and learn in class is generally influenced in all these areas. Individual distinctness in class exists not only among students and their peers but is also exacerbated by language and cultural differences between the teachers and the students.

#### ***D. Impoverished***

On the other hand, problems and difficulties are inevitable in every workplace, some are manageable, and some are not. Participants identified some worries in far-flung like impoverished, absenteeism, students nutrition, retention skills of the students, lack of learning materials, and teachers. The poverty associated with parental educational levels is relevant to predicting children's academic and behavioral outcomes (Davis-Kean, 2005). The statements above were similar to many teachers in Geographically Isolated and Depressed Areas (GIDA). The school, its students, and the community exhibit poverty. Geographically isolated communities are usually deprived. The study area lacks so many things. Most households served by the school are penurious, parents have low educational backgrounds, and some have not gone to school.

#### ***F. Different obstacles in learning: a language barrier, student retention, learning materials, absenteeism, child labor, unmanageable behavior, weather condition***

One more significant theme that emerged during the extraction of the transcripts from the participants' responses was the language barrier. According to Collins (1992), in teaching, communication conveys information through the trading of ideas, feelings, intentions, expectations, perceptions, or commands by speech, writing, and gestures and by other means between two or more participants. The author elaborated that a planned dialogue between the pupils and the teachers forms

a vital part of the classroom communication process, and a statement serves the purpose. This means that what works for one teacher may not be the most effective choice for the other.

In short, an undistorted message during the lesson results from effective communication. Even with the burning desire of the teachers to teach the students, teachers are not free from experiencing barriers in delivering the goods to the students. Most of the teachers shared during the interview that barriers in communication are their common issue in the instruction of the lessons. They shared that most of their students are I.P.'s, and they don't have any background in their dialect, which makes it difficult for them to deliver instructions.

One participant encountered an additional significant emergent theme was child labor and absenteeism. Absenteeism is related to culture and beliefs, allowing the students to work. In this manner, those children have to work; they risk losing out on education. Many child laborers either attend a school or drop out early. These become an additional burden to the teachers. Extensively explored for those who combine work and education, achievement at school often suffers (Guarcello et al., 2015).

Another significant emergent theme arises a problem in the retention skills of students due to weather conditions and students' nutrition. Other students walk to school for kilometers daily. Some of the teachers were teary-eyed, sharing the stories of their students. Studies have shown that students deprived of food will low academic performance. These affect the students and their growth (Quejada & Orale, 2018).

#### ***E. Instructional Materials, Access/road going to school***

Like teachers in far-flung who found hard times in dealing with different tasks, the most challenging parts were the following: approaches to multi-grade learners, preparation of the instructional materials, handling other behavior, guiding students to value education, and lastly, the challenging road.

Many argue that teaching is a vocation and not an easy profession (Khan, 2007). Teachers are entrusted with so many responsibilities, every day, and the teachers encounter them as part of their work or mission that they are in. Understanding the need to motivate is necessary since this will help learners learn better. However, encouraging the students requires a very demanding role on the part of the teacher. It entails various teaching styles or techniques just to capture students' interests.

#### ***F. Parental Financial Literacy***

Coping with the challenges/struggles of teaching in a far-flung school comes in different ways: parental financial literacy. Danes (1994) points out that parents play an essential role in imparting knowledge of money's realistic and sensitive aspects. Financial education is necessary for young adults to make a better economy. However, they seem to pass only their feelings about money. They could factually educate their children about finances, and they may be less likely to develop poor habits. If young adults enter the mature world with sound financial literacy, it could have a macroeconomic effect.

#### ***G. Contextualized I.M.'s***

One more theme that emerged was making contextualized instructional materials, as mentioned by participant 4. According to Kalchik S. and Oertle K.M. (2010), contextualized teaching is a method built on recognizing that some students learn more effectively when taught in a hands-on, real-world context rather than in an intangible manner.

#### ***H. One-on-One Reading***

An additional theme that emerged was a one-on-one reading tutorial. Participant 6 pointed out. For Karve (2006), the tutorial is a powerful teaching-learning tool. It helps the learners enhance their intellectual, communication, and social skills. On safety matters, staying in the far-flung schools was safe and unsafe.

#### ***I. Safe and Unsafe***

Safe because the community loved and respected the teachers, as revealed in the statements of Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. On the contrary, unsafe since chaos and misunderstanding within the community are inevitable due to the presence of insurgents within the area, as revealed in the statements of Participants 5 and 7.

Conferring to Kos (2018), teachers play a vital role in educating and inspiring the next generation of leaders. They serve as influential people in the children's lives. They can make a real difference by using both their inborn abilities and those developed through the learning process and experiences within their professional work. However, this mission is not fulfilling due to the conflict in the areas where they are assigned. It was both safe and unsafe in far-flung schools traveling back and forth. You feel safer if you are with a good companion and journey with extra caution, as stated by Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. The same as experienced by teacher Pascual (2000), during the rainy season, hiking was arduous because the mud was very sticky. She jumped over the canals, walled in the creeks, and walked in rice paddies with sweat dripping from her forehead to toes. But with no regrets, she thanked God for the chance of a real immersion in school life at a far-flung barrio.

On the other hand, teaching in far-flung schools can be considered not safe because of the different incidents, and it is geographically far, as stated by Participants 5 and 7. As for Quejada A.B. and Orale R.L. (2018) statement, teachers in remote areas also put their lives at stake. Teachers in the school walk for kilometers to be in the class. It is particularly challenging during the rainy days, making trails going to school. Filipino teachers are like the second parents to their students and their associates. They risk their lives and their entire family to pursue their chosen vocation.

**J. *Enjoyment in Different Activities***

Many participants revealed that the most enjoyable parts of teaching in far-flung schools were during an outing in nearby rivers, during different students' activities and when you feel a warm acceptance and when you are welcomed in the community. Additionally, Trigwell (2012) found that teachers described higher levels of enjoyment towards teaching was on a student-focused approach.

**K. *Students as an inspiration***

One emergent theme arises as to what keeps as an inspiration the teachers to continue teaching in far-flung schools is the students. Teachers always keep the passion burning to continue teaching, for it is a mission/vocation. As stated by the participants. Goldeberg (2014) perceived that the benefit of remaining in the teaching profession was seeing students succeed. He indicated that when the former students return and tell him that they are graduating from high school, they will be attending college or doing other things (i.e., working), it is satisfying. Also, in Javilla's (2019) study, "I guess in educating the students, there are many challenges that we face as educators, but when you know that you can make a difference in a child's learning, you are affecting a life. It makes me feel good to know that I helped them".

**L. *Advantages***

Teaching in far-flung schools also had compensations as emergent themes revealed such as receiving a hazard pay, learning the dialect of the community, can save money and lastly, it strengthens the relationship of the students, teachers, and the community as quoted by participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. According to Hughes (2012), the decision of the teachers' to stay in or leave the field of teaching is related to the quality of their relationship with the students and their families.

**M. *Disadvantages***

Detriments in teaching in far-flung schools come in many ways as emergent themes revealed: geographically far and risky for students and teachers, living away from home and hospitals, and burden for additional expenses. Quejada A.B., and Orale, R.L. (2018) stated that far-flung schools are difficult to reach and often dangerous. Traveling to the nearest reachable road requires endurance and courage. This is the reason why younger teachers are the ones assigned there.

**Table 2: The Feelings of Teachers Teaching in Far-Flung Schools**

Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
Feelings of Teachers 1. Determined to learn the dialect of the learners 2. Worried and stressed because of student's fight 3. Hurt and pitied the learners marrying at an early age 4. It's painful for a teacher to see her students did not continue schooling 5. The teacher felt sad and worried	1. Determination 2. Teachers' feeling about teaching in far-flung schools was worried, stressed, hurt, pitied, sad, anxious, and painful.

6. Happy and fulfilled 7. Adjusted with the workplace 8. Seldom went home, making fruitful time while in the far-flung area 9. Adjustments and extending more patience to the level of the learners 10. The people value and respect the teachers 11. The teacher experienced a considerable improvement in his teaching career 12. Satisfactory feeling as long as loved ones are safe 13. The teacher felt contentment 14. The teacher felt fulfilled with the job 15. Blissful	1. Happy and fulfilled 2. Adjustments 3. Value and respect teachers 4. Improvements 5. Satisfaction, contentment, and blissful
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### Central Theme: Positive Feelings towards works

#### A. Determination

The participants' feelings about teaching in far-flung schools are positive and negative, as revealed in the study. But teachers' evidence showed that teachers in far-flung areas had not ceased continuously wearing an optimistic outlook towards work despite the situation. They love their work and always want to inspire the lives of the children who were patiently waiting at every start of the week.

**B. Teachers' feeling about teaching in far-flung schools was the following: worried, stressed, hurt, pitied, sad, anxious, and painful.**

According to the remote educator of northern territory Russell et al. (2017), when you first arrive, you may experience a degree of culture shock, a feeling of confusion, uncertainty, and frustration, when you come into contact with a new culture. It can affect individuals differently and varies according to life experiences. Under certain circumstances, individuals in any profession can experience stress, especially teachers who are not immune to this feeling. Schultz (2008) pointed out that it is usually unhealthy but not consistently wrong. A healthy level of stress can be perceived as positive. Managing, developing, and employing strategies are keys to handling and relieving stress.

Same with the participants' feelings, despite the different emotions identified by the teachers when problems arise like feelings of worry, stress, hurt, pity, sadness, and pain, they were still determined and consistent in their mission in their teaching profession. They find answers/solutions to their problems in far-flung areas. Searching for meaning is a self-determined behavior and not only important to the individual, but it is an essential need that promotes desired effects in varied cultural settings (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim & Kaplan, 2003). Positive work outcomes and organizational commitment have long-term benefits for the organizations that attempt to foster initiatives that promote a healthy environment at work.

#### C. Happy and Fulfilled

To make sense of this, the participants revealed their feelings during their first year in the far-flung area: happiness, fulfillment, and making the days in the far-flung more productive, as Participants 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 divulged in their statements.

#### D. Adjustments

According to Searle and Ward (1990), adjustment can be defined in terms of psychological and sociocultural adjustment; psychological adjustment denotes the feelings of well-being and satisfaction, and Sociocultural adjustment indicates the ability to fit in and negotiate interactive aspects of the new culture. The participant felt full of adjustments about this, as revealed in their statements.

#### E. Valued, Respected, Satisfied, and Contented

Asking for their feelings about today's period revealed that they felt valued, respected, contented, satisfied, and improved. Since teachers do not enter the profession for the money, Bobek (2002) wrote, "Teacher satisfaction was contingent on levels of autonomy, perceived and recognized accomplishments and supportive, collegial relationship." So, in general, teachers' feelings about teaching in far-flung schools were all positive, enjoyable, happy, proud, inspired, and priceless.

**Table 3: The Impact on their Teaching in Far-Flung Schools**

Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
Impact on their Teaching Profession 1. Molds to become a better teacher 2. Felt free, at home, and comfortable 3. The teacher learned to share knowledge in a better relationship 4. Extending more patience to the learners 5. The teacher develops a connection with the learners and with the community 6. The teacher learned about the attitude and culture of the community 7. Learned from them about their tradition. 8. To love your work 9. To socialize with the community, be committed, and be loyal to the teaching profession. 10. To understand and be considerate in every situation. 11. Determined to teach 12. Became effective and efficient in teaching 13. Became flexible and ready always. 14. Committed to the profession	1. Comfortable living 2. Better Relationship 3. Adapting the lifestyle, beliefs, culture, and tradition. 4. Love of work 5. Commitment, loyalty, and consideration 6. Teachers are determined, effective and, efficient, flexible

**Central Theme: Passionate Teachers: A sense of Satisfaction and Commitment**

**A. Comfortable living**

The conditions of reaching the schools require enthusiasm and committed teachers to provide the much-needed services. When people are satisfied with their choice of profession, they tend to continue in that line of work, which may be exact for the teaching profession. When the administrators, other teachers, and parents recognize the teachers' success, job satisfaction can increase. Bobek (2002) asserted that teachers are more motivated to remain in their classrooms when acknowledged for their work, although they have encountered disappointing situations. It is congratulating and stimulating to stay in the teaching profession despite possible discouraging experiences.

**B. Better Relationship**

Things that the participants learned teaching in far-flung schools: they become better people, they can communicate effectively, and live life free and comfortable, as Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 stated.

**C. Adapting the lifestyle, beliefs, culture, ad tradition**

According to the remote educator of northern territory Russell et al. (2017), cultural competence is the ability to understand and respect values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that differ across cultures and consider and respond appropriately to these differences. One way to develop cultural competency is to form a relationship with adults and children within the community.

Participants 5, 6, and 7 revealed that teachers learned to develop a good relationship with the learners and the people in the community and to adapt to the lifestyles, beliefs, culture, and traditions. Thus, the teacher's dedication to stay in or leave the field of teaching is related to the quality of their relationship with the students and their families.

**D. Love of Work**

According to Barcena (2018), teachers serve as resources persons, confidants, friends, and models to everyone. That is why they have an eminent impact, not only on their students but also on other people and on the schools where they teach. According to Hall (2015), reaching out to the students and making a difference in their lives was fundamental in deciding

to remain in the teaching profession. With this, teachers in far-flung areas were able to develop the minds of their students, teaching them the importance of having a good education and changing an individual into a productive member of the community by helping them. Those learnings develop the teachers to handle the multi-grade learners, to communicate, socialize, and love their work, as evident in the statements of Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7.

#### ***E. Commitment, loyalty, and consideration***

Other teachers become more committed, loyal, and considerate in every situation; these teachers' experiences in these selected schools present how passionate they are in honing the cognitive aspect of the child and how dedicated to giving their very best to impart learning to these hungry minds. This simply means that teachers are present in the community not merely to teach the children but to serve as a living catalyst to sustain every individual's values, integrity, and rights as they educate their students. The teachers were able to develop the mind of the children on the importance of having a good education, the values, and the chance to change an individual into a productive member of the community.

#### ***F. Determined, effective, efficient, and flexible***

Quejada A.B., and Orale, R.L. (2018) emphasized that good education is personal, and effective teaching is concerned with the student as a person and his development. "Effective learning in the classroom depends on motivating and keeping the students interested in the teaching-learning process. Teachers' experiences affect their teaching and develop as passionate yet resilient individuals as they quoted. Indeed, teachers' experiences affect their teaching so that they become more determined, effective, efficient, flexible, and committed to their profession and vocation. Thus, this supports the ideas of Maslow (1954), self-actualization is the instinctual need of humans to do the best of their abilities to strive, to be the best they could be, and fulfill the need to maximize one's potential. Self-actualization is the motivation that people have to work toward fulfilling their potential and becoming all that they are capable of becoming.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Major Findings**

This qualitative research describes the lived experiences of teachers in far-flung schools of Barangay Datal Anggas categorized into three main themes: Life of Teachers in Far-flung Schools, Positive Outlook towards work, Passionate Teachers: Sense of Satisfaction and Commitment.

The lives of teachers in far-flung schools are challenged to work out of their comfort zone and to deal with students and communities with different cultures. They employed different strategies for adaptation that helped them survive and stay in far-flung areas. Their situation as a far-flung teachers is not as easy as what some had narrated. They were able to manage and cope with different problems and challenges in the far-flung areas; they even became more resilient, brave, consistent, and determined to stay and impart their knowledge to the empty minds of their children.

Far-flung teachers are frequently facing factors and circumstances that shape their character and how they choose to handle the situations that may affect how they feel; the feelings of sadness, worries, and pains are not the hindrance or reasons to leave the school children. Teachers have developed commitment and dedication to their vocation/mission.

Thus, they have found reasons for staying in their respective schools as they found loving children and found a purpose in which teachers are being respected. They believe that student achievement is possible. They also found a school or community that welcomed them. Making a difference in the lives of the school children with satisfaction and commitment drove them to work there.

### **4.2 Comparison of findings with existing studies**

Far-flung schools are mostly deprived of the much-needed facilities (Figuerola et al., 2016), and the teachers are exposed to various types of stress, which may affect their performance (Hartney, 2020; Quejada, A. B., & Orale, R. L. (2018). The Philippine Constitution emphasized the importance of education. Article XIV Section 1 of 1987 states that they should protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education and make such education accessible to all. However, UNESCO says that less than 10% of children of primary school age in the Philippines are out of school.

Accessibility to school is one of the reasons. Our government is exerting efforts to make the schools accessible to all barangays. This has resulted in about 94.5 percent of school-aged children enrolling in the primary levels (House of Representatives, 2017).

Learning facilitators are the critical support persons responsible for facilitating the learning process of the learners (Congress of the Philippines, 2001). In general, a teacher's role in the classroom is to impart knowledge to the children. Teaching is a vocation than a mere job (Cookson, 2005); some term it a calling (Bluestein, 2010); contextually, education is considered as such due to the extreme dedication beyond what is expected costs. Remote schools in the Philippines still face an insufficiency of teaching resources, and teachers are continuously challenged in delivering quality primary education in remote areas. The conditions of schools require passionate and committed teachers to provide much-needed services.

It is a practice in the Philippines that those neophyte teachers are assigned in ill flavored places, like far-flung schools. The desire of the new teachers to gain employment is commonly for economic reasons. Remote schools are difficult to reach and often dangerous. Traveling to and from the nearest road requires stamina and courage. That is why younger teachers are the ones assigned there. Given the first professional teaching task, a neophyte teacher is already a challenge. This is further aggravated when they are given to a small school, from all possible comfort. Food, accommodation, security, and safety are some of the initial fear of the teachers.

Those experiences are similar to many teachers in Geographically Isolated and Depressed Areas (GIDA). The school, its students, and the community exhibit poverty. The school lacks teaching-learning resources. Some students are slow learners and are nonreaders. Teachers need to ride a motorcycle and walk for kilometers in sometimes slippery/muddy trails to reach the school. Some students come from neighboring barangays and also walk daily to school. The teachers shed a part of their earnings to buy school supplies for classroom use to facilitate learning. Sharing food and school supplies for students are also ordinary to them. Despite fulfilling experiences of serving an underprivileged community, teachers in this study are also looking forward to a better assignment soon.

Indeed, teaching in a small school is an enormous challenge. Teachers would encounter a variety of uncomfortable means of transportation like "habal-habal," and even the use of animals such as horses or carabao just to reach the school (Barcena, 2018). Teachers risk their lives and their entire families to pursue their chosen careers. Some teachers need to walk thousands of meters to rough terrains in these areas. In the country, few pieces of research have documented the lives of teachers in remote areas. These are from news agencies that illustrated their ordeal in delivering services to the children. These are stories of an elementary teacher who walks 23 kilometers daily (Quejada, A. B., & Orale, R. L., 2018), trekking into the mountains (Mallari, 2010), and conducts classes anywhere available (Umil, 2015), and other challenges.

Teachers' ongoing commitment and dedication to students and learning are some of the most significant factors in developing a passion for teaching. Eager to learn, the teachers are fiercely faithful to their work and significantly inspire their students (Fox, 1964). Certain aspects of education in remote areas—like extreme temperatures and devastating social issues—are demanding; the impact you can have as an educator can precisely make a difference in people's lives and inspire others to do the same.

The teacher-participants have shown their commitment to their responsibilities as primary teachers. According to Fox (1964), a dedicated teacher has the following distinctive; (a) desires to be a good teacher; (b) purveyor of facts; (c) recognizes and accepts the worth of an individual; and (d) fulfills professional duties. The participants have shown these characteristics. They know their responsibility; is to give the best quality of education they can offer. Because of this desire, the teacher participants learned to become more resourceful, using what is available and adapting to the situation. They have even shared a portion of their remuneration for classroom activities in their desire to help their students.

The multi-grade nature of classes in the research locale was a great challenge to the teachers. The teacher-participants in this study have not considered teaching choice for a profession; they have been influenced primarily by their immediate family and by the teachers or school leaders they have encountered early on. The availability of teaching positions was also a factor for them enrolling finally in teaching. Although education was not the priority course of some teacher participants, they have learned to love it fully while studying and more at work. They have been moved by what they saw on-site, and their compassionate nature fueled their interest in doing more for the students. They look at their assignment in the far-flung school as temporary, a stepping stone to a more comfortable work assignment.

Despite the worries of the assignment with an emphasis on the location and access, the participants recognized the challenge out of necessity. A job to help their respective families, eventually, the participants will be re-assigned to carline schools or to where their homes are. They believe neophyte teachers will replace them in the future. Some of them felt sad about that reality as they learned to love the community where they are currently stationed.

#### 4.3 Limitations

This study focused on the Lived Experiences of Teachers in far-flung schools. It is limited on seven (7) teachers from the farthest far-flung schools in Barangay Datal Anggas Alabel, Sarangani Province. Inclusion criteria were as follows: two (2) newly hired teachers who rendered at least a year of teaching experience, three (3) teachers who worked three to five years in teaching service, and two (2) participants who worked more than five (5) years of teaching experience. All the participants are teachers with a permanent appointments in the Department of Education. As Creswell (2014) stated, only a few individuals would be studied in qualitative research. It is because the researcher provided an in-depth picture of a specific phenomenon. Moreover, he explained that collecting and analyzing qualitative data take considerable time, and the addition of each lengthens the time.

Thus, this study cannot give a general picture of teachers' teaching in far-flung. It was only limited to the responses gathered from the seven teachers of Alabel 4, Alabel District, Division of Sarangani.

#### 4.4 Implications for future research

The research results could not generate a generalization of the lived teachers' experiences teaching in far-flung schools. Hence, a study of the same kind may be conducted in other districts and divisions to validate the results. Moreover, further research may be done to re-interview some of the participants in the study to see whether their views, feelings, and impact of lived experiences of teachers teaching in far-flung schools have changed over some time. Further research may also be conducted from the perspective of the school heads and the administrators to have diverse information in creating a broader view and to help the teachers teaching in far-flung areas.

#### 4.5 Overall Significance of the Study

This phenomenological qualitative research would greatly help the *school administrators, teachers, parents, policymakers, and students in far-flung schools. Then, teachers will also be made aware of the experiences of their fellow teachers, especially those who are teaching in far-flung areas.*

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