



Challenges and Adaptive Strategies of Volunteer Educators in Aglipay East District, Philippines

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Abstract

Review Article

Volunteer educators play a crucial role in bridging instructional gaps in underserved and rural public schools. However, they frequently navigate challenging educational environments with limited systemic support. This study utilized a Transcendental Phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences, underlying challenges, and adaptive strategies of volunteer educators in the Alipay East District, Philippines. Grounded in Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory and Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, the research involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 13 purposefully selected volunteer and locally hired educators. Data were systematically transcribed, coded, and analyzed using NVivo software following Moustakas’ phenomenological reduction method. The findings revealed five primary challenges encountered by the educators: severe resource and curriculum limitations that frequently result in personal out-of-pocket expenses; complexities in instructional delivery due to strict time constraints and mixed-ability classrooms; difficulties in conducting fair assessments exacerbated by irregular attendance and academic dishonesty; barriers to learner engagement driven by socio-economic distractions; and variability in stakeholder support, specifically the stigma associated with the "volunteer" label which can breed parental mistrust. Despite these structural and socio-economic hurdles, the participants demonstrated high levels of resilience. To sustain their teaching effectiveness, they employed adaptive strategies such as spontaneous pedagogical improvisation—including on-the-spot resourcefulness and localized material creation—and relied heavily on intrinsic motivation, peer support networks, and mindful self-care. The study concludes that while volunteer educators exhibit remarkable adaptability, relying solely on individual resilience is an unsustainable substitute for structured institutional backing. The findings serve as an empirical foundation for a proposed localized intervention program, which advocates for the establishment of material subsidies, contextualized capacity-building, and formalized community-school dialogues to support non-permanent teaching personnel. Ultimately, this research provides vital insights for policymakers to cultivate responsive ecosystems that enhance educator retention and student learning outcomes.

Keywords: Volunteer Educators, Transcendental Phenomenology, Educational Challenges, Adaptive Strategies, Teacher Resilience.

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Introduction

Education is widely seen as a basic human right and an essential part of social and economic growth (UNESCO, 2015). Even with ongoing changes and investments in the Philippine education system, access to quality education is still unequal, especially in rural, remote, and low-income areas. To tackle issues like teacher shortages, limited resources, and growing student needs, the Department of Education (DepEd) has often depended on volunteer educators, locally hired teachers, and community-based teaching efforts to help the formal teaching workforce.

Volunteer educators are key for maintaining learning in public schools and community learning environments. These educators can include locally hired teachers, community volunteers, substitute or temporary teachers, and non-permanent instructional aides who help with teaching, tutoring, and supporting students. In many areas, including Aglipay East District, volunteer educators are used to fill gaps caused by teacher shortages, support multigrade classes, help at-risk students, and provide instruction in hard-to-reach places. While they perform similar roles to regular teachers, volunteer educators often face hard conditions, such as low pay, lack of teaching materials, no formal training, and little institutional support.

Current studies on volunteerism and volunteer teaching show that volunteer educators often face challenges like a lack of resources, fitted schedules, various learners, unclear roles, and emotional stress (Luo, 2025). Despite these issues, many choose to continue their work because of a desire to help others, career goals, commitment to the community, and inner drive. Research also highlights how volunteer educators develop strategies to deal with instructional, organizational, and contextual challenges. They might improvise teaching materials, work with fellow educators, tailor lessons to their context, and build strong community partnerships.

Although international and national studies have looked at volunteer teachers in various settings, there

is still little localized research documenting the specific challenges and strategies of volunteer educators in rural districts of the Philippines. In Aglipay East District, where schools and communities deal with issues linked to geography, resources, and staffing, understanding the day-to-day experiences of volunteer educators is crucial. Exploring their challenges and coping strategies offers important insights that can guide school leadership, district-level support systems, and DepEd policies concerning volunteer and locally hired teachers.

Methodology

This chapter presents the research design, participants, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures employed in the study. It explains how the study was conducted, the rationale behind the chosen approach, and the steps taken to ensure the credibility, reliability, and ethical integrity of the findings.

This study employed a Transcendental Phenomenological Research Design, grounded in the foundational framework of Moustakas (1994) and supported by contemporary qualitative inquiry practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transcendental phenomenology seeks to illuminate the essence of a specific phenomenon as it is lived and experienced by individuals. This is achieved by systematically setting aside the researcher's preconceived assumptions through a disciplined process of *epoché* or bracketing (Neubauer et al., 2019).

The central phenomenon explored in this study is the lived experience of being a volunteer educator in the Aglipay East District. Specifically, the inquiry focused on understanding: (a) How volunteer educators experience challenges in directing the curriculum, accessing learning resources, executing instructional delivery, conducting assessments, promoting learner engagement, and securing institutional and stakeholder support; (b) How they consciously and unconsciously develop adaptive strategies in response to these daily challenges; and (c) How the

shared essence of these experiences can be synthesized to inform a responsive intervention program.

A transcendental approach is particularly appropriate for this inquiry because it moves beyond surface-level descriptions, aiming to uncover the universal "essence" of volunteer teaching within a specific institutional ecosystem, allowing the authentic voices of the educators to direct the research outcomes (Vagle, 2018).

The study was conducted in Aglipay East District, a public school district operating under the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd). The district comprises various elementary and secondary schools that actively engage volunteer and locally hired educators to augment their instructional services. Establishing a clear contextual boundary is vital in phenomenological research, as the physical, social, and cultural environment inevitably shapes the participants' lived realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This locale provided a rich, meaningful context for the phenomenon, as the educators operating within this district navigate distinct instructional demands, systemic resource limitations, and unique institutional structures.

The participants of the inquiry were purposefully selected based on their direct, first-hand experience with the phenomenon under investigation (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Therefore, participant selection utilized a purposive, criterion-based sampling technique. The participants consisted of 13 volunteer educators who met the following inclusion criteria:

1. Currently serving in public schools within the Aglipay East District during the School Year 2025–2026;
2. Possessed at least one year of teaching experience as a volunteer or locally hired educator; and
3. Expressed willingness and articulateness to provide in-depth reflections on their lived experiences.

The sample size of 13 aligns with phenomenological standards, which prioritize the

depth and richness of data over large sample sizes. Data collection concluded upon reaching data saturation—the point at which subsequent interviews yielded redundant information and no new significant thematic meanings emerged (Saunders et al., 2018; Vasileiou et al., 2018).

Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured phenomenological interviews, a method highly effective for eliciting rich, first-person narrative accounts (McGrath et al., 2019). Following institutional approval and the acquisition of informed consent, each participant engaged in an individual interview lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

The interviews were conversational yet focused, guided by open-ended prompts designed to explore the central phenomenon:

- “Can you describe your lived experience as a volunteer educator?”
- “What challenges stand out most vividly in your daily teaching work?”
- “How do you experience implementing the curriculum despite limitations?”
- “How do you cope or adjust when difficulties arise?”

Follow-up probes were utilized dynamically to encourage participants to elaborate on their feelings, thoughts, situational contexts, and interactions with the school community. With explicit consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Additionally, the researcher maintained detailed field notes to document contextual nuances, non-verbal cues, and environmental factors that audio recordings alone could not capture (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018).

The data analysis strictly adhered to Moustakas' (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method for transcendental phenomenology. To ensure systematic organization, coding, and retrieval of large textual datasets, NVivo, a strong qualitative data analysis software, was utilized (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019).

The analytic progression consisted of the following rigorous steps:

1. The researcher systematically revisited reflexive journals to sustain a bracketed mindset before engaging with the raw transcripts.
2. *Phenomenological Reduction:* (a) *Horizonalization:* Transcripts were read iteratively to achieve immersion. Every statement relevant to the experience of volunteer teaching was identified and treated with equal epistemological value. Using NVivo, these meaningful statements were initially coded as free nodes without hierarchical structuring. (b) *Delimiting and Clustering:* Overlapping, redundant, or strictly tangential statements were eliminated. The remaining invariant constituents were clustered into cohesive themes. NVivo's matrix coding queries and node categorization tools facilitated the comparison of experiential patterns across all 13 participants, yielding core themes such as navigating instructional limitations and improvised resilience.
3. *Textural Description:* Drawing from the clustered themes, a textural description ("what" was experienced) was drafted for each participant. This stage detailed the concrete challenges, emotional strains, and coping behaviors narrated during the interviews, utilizing verbatim extracts retrieved via NVivo to ground the findings.
4. *Structural Description:* The researcher then constructed a structural description ("how" the experience occurred), integrating imaginative variation to explore the underlying contexts and systemic conditions—such as resource constraints, power dynamics, and employment insecurity—that shaped the participants' realities.
5. *Synthesis of Meanings and Essences:* Finally, the textural and structural descriptions were unified into a composite synthesis. This comprehensive narrative captures the invariant essence of the phenomenon,

articulating what it fundamentally means to be a volunteer educator within the Aglipay East District ecosystem.

The study strictly adhered to standard ethical guidelines for human subjects' research (American Psychological Association, 2020). Formal approval was secured from the Department of Education district authorities before data collection. Participants were fully briefed on the study's objectives and provided written informed consent. To guarantee absolute confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned immediately, and all digital files (including audio recordings and NVivo project databases) were stored in password-protected, encrypted drives. Participation was entirely voluntary, and educators retained the right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any institutional or personal repercussions.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To establish the methodological rigor and trustworthiness of this qualitative inquiry, the framework established by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and updated by modern qualitative scholars (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) was strictly applied:

- Credibility: Ensured through prolonged engagement with the participants and member checking, wherein synthesized thematic summaries were returned to participants to verify accuracy and resonance.
- Transferability: Facilitated by providing thick, rich, and highly contextualized descriptions of the research setting and the participants lived experiences, allowing future researchers to assess the applicability of the findings to other contexts.
- Dependability: Maintained through a comprehensive audit trail, including securely stored NVivo coding logs, interview transcripts, and methodological memos (Nowell et al., 2017).
- Confirmability: Secured through continuous reflexive journaling and peer debriefing

sessions to validate the emergence of themes and mitigate researcher bias.

CHALLENGES AND ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES OF VOLUNTEER EDUCATORS

This section explores the challenges faced by volunteer educators and the strategies they employ to adapt to these difficulties. Understanding these experiences provides insight into the practical, social, and organizational factors that influence their effectiveness and sustainability in educational settings.

Results and Discussion

Based on the interview transcripts provided, here is the thematic matrix organizing the lived experiences of the volunteer educators into overarching themes, sub-themes (nodes), descriptions, and verbatim evidence.

Table 1. NVivo Thematic Coding Matrix: Challenges and Adaptive Strategies of Volunteer Educators

Overarching Theme	Nodes (Sub-Themes)	Core Description	Representative Quotes (Verbatim Evidence)
1. Resource and Curriculum Limitations	Lack of Physical and Digital Materials	Educators struggle with unavailable modules, outdated resources, and a lack of technological tools like laptops and projectors. Some teachers experience personal financial strain to bridge these gaps.	"Personal Financial Burden is one of the biggest hurdles that I encountered as a volunteer teacher because frequently I used my personal funds to buy teaching supplies or cover transportation costs." (T13).
2. Complexities in Instructional Delivery	Time Constraints and Learner Diversity	Teachers face difficulties maximizing a short 45-minute timeframe while simultaneously managing student discipline, varying academic levels, and diverse age groups within the same classroom.	"Since the time allotment is only 45 minutes, it is very short for discussing historical concepts... Sometimes, just settling the class and managing behavior already takes several minutes, which reduces the actual teaching time." (T1).
3. Assessment and Evaluation Difficulties	Fair Evaluation and Academic Integrity	Evaluating students accurately is hindered by inconsistent attendance, diverse learning needs, and instances of academic dishonesty (such as cheating on modular tasks).	"Giving them short quiz, is my way of assessing their learning but challenges maybe are some were cheating and some do not even read the questions." (T8).
4. Barriers to Learner Engagement	External Distractions and Disconnection	Students frequently lose focus or fail to attend classes due to external obligations (working for families), fatigue depending on the time of day, or feeling that the lessons are heavily theory-based and disconnected from their reality.	"I noticed that many of them looked tired, bored, and less participative compared to morning classes... After lunch, students tend to feel sleepy and less focused." (T1).
5. Variability in Stakeholder Support	Institutional Backing vs. Parental Mistrust	While schools and municipalities often provide structured support and funds, teachers frequently experience a lack of consistent follow-up from parents and face stigma due to their "volunteer" status.	"Sometimes they don't fully trust us on how we evaluate learners because of the idea that we are just 'volunteer teachers'" (T4).

6. Pedagogical Improvisation	On-the-Spot Resourcefulness	Teachers demonstrate high adaptability by quickly modifying lessons when technology fails, utilizing the chalkboard, and integrating current events to make lessons relevant on the fly.	<i>"When the projector failed during a lesson, I quickly switched from a PowerPoint presentation to a group discussion activity." (T3).</i> "
7. Personal Coping and Motivation	Psychological Resilience and Self-Care	To combat emotional strain and structural hurdles, educators rely heavily on intrinsic motivation, taking mindful breaks, celebrating small wins, and focusing on community betterment.	<i>"I'll just think that this is for the betterment of our community and for them to help." (T5).</i>

The following are the details of the findings of the inquiry as indicated in Table 1-Nvivo Thematic Coding Matrix: Challenges and Adaptive Strategies of Volunteer Educators.

A. CHALLENGES FACED BY VOLUNTEER TEACHERS

This segment highlights the key challenges encountered by volunteer teachers, shedding light on the obstacles that affect their teaching effectiveness and overall experience.

Theme#1. Resource and Curriculum Limitations

While some teachers find the curriculum well-structured, a dominant theme is the lack of physical and digital resources. Educators frequently report missing modules, limited textbooks, and a lack of technology like laptops or multimedia tools. Furthermore, some teachers experience personal financial burdens because they use their own funds to buy teaching supplies or pay for transportation.

Subtheme#1.1. Lack of Physical and Digital Materials

The findings reveal a significant hurdle regarding the lack of physical and digital learning materials, which heavily burdens volunteer educators. Teachers reported that the current curriculum is often well-structured, but the actual implementation falls short due to unavailable modules, outdated textbooks, and a profound lack of technological tools like laptops and projectors. A

striking manifestation of this limitation is the personal financial burden borne by the educators. For instance, T13 noted using personal funds to "buy teaching supplies or cover transportation costs" to bridge the gap left by systemic inadequacies.

"Sometimes modules are unavailable and a lack of technologies like a laptop" (T4).

"Personal Financial Burden is one of the biggest hurdles that I encountered as a volunteer teacher because frequently I used my personal funds to buy teaching supplies or cover transportation costs." (T13).

This phenomenon aligns with recent literature on educational inequity in developing contexts. Carvalho et al. (2020) emphasize that resource scarcity in public educational systems directly correlates with increased out-of-pocket expenditures by teachers, which can lead to rapid burnout. Furthermore, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) argue that the equitable distribution of digital and physical resources is foundational to curriculum success; without these, even the most well-designed curricula fail to translate into effective classroom instruction.

Theme #2. Complexities in Instructional Delivery

Managing classroom time is a significant hurdle, with teachers noting that a 45-minute allotment is too short for meaningful discussion, especially when time is lost to managing student discipline. Teachers also struggle to adapt lessons to

diverse learning abilities and different age groups within the same classroom.

Subtheme #2.1- Time Constraints and Learner Diversity

Volunteer educators experience substantial difficulties in maximizing limited instructional time while catering to diverse student populations. T1 highlighted that a 45-minute time allotment is exceptionally brief for meaningful discussion, especially when several minutes are sacrificed to behavioral management and class settling. Additionally, educators like T2 and T12 expressed significant challenges in adapting their instructional delivery to suit diverse learning abilities and different age groups present within a single classroom.

"Since the time allotment is only 45 minutes, it is very short for discussing historical concepts... Sometimes, just settling the class and managing behavior already takes several minutes, which reduces the actual teaching time." (T1).

"It's hard to suit to the age of my learners that is my biggest hurdles." (T2).

The challenge of navigating diverse classrooms within rigid time constraints is well-documented. Tomlinson (2021) notes that implementing differentiated instruction—a necessity for mixed-ability and mixed-age classrooms—requires significant time for planning and execution, a luxury rarely afforded in under-resourced public schools. Similarly, Hattie (2023) discusses how behavioral management issues in crowded classrooms disproportionately consume instructional time, thereby diminishing the overall efficacy of lesson delivery.

Theme #3. Assessment and Evaluation Difficulties

Teachers utilize a mix of formative and summative assessments, including daily quizzes and

functional literacy tests. However, they face challenges in evaluating students fairly due to inconsistent student attendance, differing learning styles, and instances of academic dishonesty or cheating.

Subtheme #3.1 - Fair Evaluation and Academic Integrity

Fair and accurate evaluation of student progress emerged as a critical challenge, primarily complicated by inconsistent student attendance and academic dishonesty. T10 explicitly stated that evaluating learners fairly is challenging because "the attendance of the learners is inconsistent". Furthermore, T8 and T13 identified systemic issues such as "academic dishonesty in modular learning" and cheating, as well as students simply not reading the questions during assessments.

"Giving them short quiz, is my way of assessing their learning but challenges maybe are some were cheating and some do not even read the questions." (T8).

"...the accuracy and fairness of the assessment are challenging as the attendance of the learners is inconsistent." (T10).

Recent studies on post-pandemic and modular learning assessments corroborate these findings. Dawson (2021) highlights that academic integrity has become increasingly difficult to monitor in distance and modular learning environments, forcing educators to rethink traditional assessment paradigms. Moreover, Boud et al. (2020) argue that when student attendance is fragmented—often due to socioeconomic factors—traditional formative assessments lose their validity, requiring teachers to rely on highly individualized, flexible assessment rubrics.

Theme #4. Barriers to Learner Engagement

Loss of student interest is heavily influenced by external and environmental factors. For adult or

ALS (Alternative Learning System) learners, financial problems and the need to work for their families frequently cause absences or lack of focus. For younger students, afternoon fatigue, heavy theory-based lessons, and lessons that feel disconnected from their daily lives lead to disengagement.

Subtheme #4.1 - External Distractions and Disconnection

A major overarching theme is the struggle to maintain student engagement amidst external socio-economic pressures and cognitive fatigue. Teachers of adult and Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners (T2, T5) noted that absenteeism is often driven by the stark reality that learners "need to work for their families". For younger learners, timing and instructional design play a role; T1 observed that during afternoon classes, students tend to be "tired, bored, and less participative," while T3 noted disengagement during heavy, theory-based lessons.

"The reason is they need to work for their families so sometimes they did not come" (T2).

"I noticed that many of them looked tired, bored, and less participative compared to morning classes... After lunch, students tend to feel sleepy and less focused." (T1).

This underscores the profound impact of socio-economic determinants on educational outcomes. Zhao and Watterston (2021) assert that marginalized students often face competing survival priorities that override their academic engagement. Additionally, Wang et al. (2021) emphasize the concept of "cognitive load and instructional fatigue," validating the observation that uninterrupted, theory-heavy lectures, particularly in the afternoon, lead to steep declines in student participation and knowledge retention.

Theme #5. Variability in Stakeholder Support

Support levels are highly variable. Institutional support is generally viewed positively, with schools and municipalities providing funds, guidance, and professional development. Parental support is mixed; while some parents are highly communicative in group chats, others lack interest or fail to provide consistent follow-up at home. A specific challenge noted is a lack of trust from some parents regarding grading, stemming from the label of being "*volunteer teacher ka lang*."

Subtheme #5.1 - Institutional Backing vs. Parental Mistrust

The educators reported a stark dichotomy in the support they receive. While institutional and municipal backing is generally viewed positively—such as the provision of funds and professional development mentioned by T2 and T12—parental support is highly inconsistent. A particularly poignant challenge is the lack of trust and stigmatization faced by the participants. T4 revealed that parents sometimes "don't fully trust us on how we evaluate learners because of the idea that we are just 'volunteer teachers'".

"Very well supported like in the Aglipay municipalities we have a fund there to cater the materials we need for our learners" (T2).

"Sometimes they don't fully trust us on how we evaluate learners because of the idea that we are just 'volunteer teachers'" (T4).

The stigmatization of volunteer and contract educators is a significant barrier to establishing robust community-school partnerships. Lau and Lee (2021) note that parental trust is inherently linked to a teacher's perceived professional status and institutional permanence. When educators are perceived as "temporary" or "volunteer," it often fractures the home-school communication channel, a

dynamic that Epstein et al. (2023) identify as deeply detrimental to holistic student development.

A. ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES OR COPING MECHANISMS VOLUNTEER EDUCATORS

This section examines the adaptive strategies and coping mechanisms employed by volunteer educators to navigate challenges and sustain their effectiveness in diverse teaching environments.

Theme #1. Pedagogical Improvisation

When lacking materials, teachers adapt by creating their own visual aids, improvising alternative materials online, or treating the chalkboard as a "living textbook". ALS implementers demonstrate extreme flexibility by conducting lessons anywhere, including roadsides, barangay gyms, or under trees

Subtheme #1.1 - On-the-Spot Resourcefulness

Faced with the aforementioned systemic deficits, volunteer educators rely heavily on on-the-spot pedagogical improvisation. The data is rich with examples of extreme adaptability: T3 switched seamlessly to a group brainstorming session when a projector failed, and T13 described pivoting to treat "the chalkboard as a living textbook" when physical books were unavailable. Furthermore, ALS implementers (T7) demonstrate spatial flexibility, conducting lessons in barangay gyms or under trees to reach their learners.

"When the projector failed during a lesson, I quickly switched from a PowerPoint presentation to a group discussion activity." (T3).

"When we faced with a lack of complete textbooks, I often pivot to treating the chalkboard as a living textbook." (T13).

This capacity for spontaneous adaptation is defined in the literature as "teacher agency" and "adaptive expertise." Priestley et al. (2021) suggest that in highly constrained educational environments, a teacher's ability to improvise is a stronger predictor of student learning than the availability of standardized resources. Sahlberg (2021) further notes that such "frugal innovation" in pedagogy is a hallmark of resilient educational systems, though it should not be an excuse for institutional underfunding.

Subtheme #1.2. - Personal Coping and Motivation

To navigate the heavy emotional and physical toll of their roles, volunteer educators utilize a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic coping mechanisms. T12 and T13 detailed strategies such as taking "mindful breaks," practicing "deliberate self-care," and relying on a "social support system" of peers. Ultimately, their persistence is anchored in a profound sense of intrinsic motivation; as T5 stated, they push through challenges by focusing on the "betterment of our community," while T10 focuses on the desire to "inspire young minds".

"To stay motivated and effective amidst challenges. I rely on a few key copings. Problem solving, mindful breaks, connecting with peers, celebrating small wins." (T12).

"I'll just think that this is for the betterment of our community and for them to help." (T5).

The reliance on intrinsic motivation and peer support to combat burnout is heavily supported by contemporary educational psychology. Gu and Day (2022) identify relational trust among peers and a deep-seated vocational calling as the primary drivers of teacher resilience in high-needs schools. Furthermore, Mansfield et al. (2020) argue that active self-care and micro-breaks are essential

protective factors that prevent emotional exhaustion among educators facing chronic resource scarcity and high pedagogical demands.

**PROPOSED INTERVENTION PROGRAM
BASED ON THE CHALLENGES
EXPERIENCED BY THE VOLUNTEER
TEACHERS**

**Project VEER (Volunteer Educator
Empowerment and Resilience)**

The findings of this phenomenological study reveal that while volunteer educators in the Aglipay East District are deeply committed and highly resourceful, they operate within a severely constrained educational ecosystem. The core themes, Resource Scarcity, Student Engagement barriers, External Support inconsistencies, and threats to

Personal Well-being, demonstrate that teachers are over-relying on their personal finances, spontaneous improvisation, and individual resilience to bridge systemic gaps.

While these adaptive strategies are commendable, they are not sustainable long-term solutions and place educators at high risk of burnout. An intervention program is urgently required to shift the burden from the individual teacher back to a supportive, structural framework. Project VEER (Volunteer Educator Empowerment and Resilience) is proposed as a multi-dimensional, localized intervention designed to build capacity, provide material and psychological support, and foster robust community-school partnerships. By addressing the specific structural barriers identified in the data, this program aims to improve both the lived experiences of the educators and the academic outcomes of their diverse learners.

A. Proposed Intervention Matrix

Core Challenge Addressed	Program Component Initiative	Objectives	Target Participants	Key Partners & Resource Requirements
1. Resource Scarcity	Local Learning Resource Bank & Material Subsidy	To establish a shared repository of localized visual aids and provide a basic monthly material subsidy to eliminate teachers' out-of-pocket expenses.	Volunteer Educators, School Heads	LGU (Local Government Unit), DepEd District Office, and community donors. (Requires funding for physical supplies/printing).
2. Student Engagement	Contextualized Pedagogical Capacity-Building	To train educators in structured gamification, differentiated instruction, and integration of real-world contexts to combat student fatigue and absenteeism.	Volunteer Educators, Master Teachers	District Supervisors, Teacher Education Institutions (for facilitation). (Requires training venues, workshop materials).
3. External Support	Community-School Synergy Dialogues	To conduct termly dialogues between parents and educators to build trust, destigmatize the "volunteer" label, and align home-school learning goals.	Parents, Volunteer Educators, Barangay Officials	PTA (Parent-Teacher Association), Barangay Councils. (Requires communication channels, meeting spaces).

4. Personal Well-being	Peer-Support and Wellness Circles (PSWC)	To institutionalize monthly wellness sessions and peer-to-peer mentoring to mitigate emotional exhaustion and foster a supportive community.	Volunteer Educators, Guidance Counselors	School Guidance Office, Mental Health Professionals. (Requires protected time during school hours).
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The proposed intervention program highlighted that resource scarcity forces volunteer educators to rely on "chalkboards" and personal funds to create visual aids. The proposed Local Learning Resource Bank acts as a collaborative hub where teachers can share locally developed, reusable materials, thereby reducing individual planning time and financial strain. Coupled with a Material Subsidy funded by the LGU or District Office, this initiative directly addresses the financial burden experienced by the participants. Thus, Carvalho et al. (2020) emphasize that out-of-pocket expenditures for basic classroom supplies significantly accelerate teacher burnout in under-resourced districts. Furthermore, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) argue that establishing collaborative resource-sharing networks not only alleviates financial strain but also promotes instructional equity, ensuring that all students—regardless of their teacher's personal financial capacity—have access to quality learning materials.

Concomitantly, because educators identified diverse ages, student fatigue, and family work obligations as barriers to engagement, they require advanced pedagogical tools beyond basic curriculum delivery. This initiative involves localized workshops led by Master Teachers focusing on gamification and differentiated instruction, formally equipping volunteer teachers with the skills they currently attempt to improvise. This context is supported by Tomlinson (2021), who asserts that proactive differentiated instruction is crucial in mixed-ability and socio-economically diverse classrooms, preventing the disengagement that occurs during "one-size-fits-all" lectures. Additionally, Wang et al. (2021) demonstrate that integrating students' real-world contexts and gamified elements into lessons significantly reduces cognitive fatigue and increases behavioral engagement, particularly for marginalized or working learners.

On the other hand, participants reported that inconsistent parental follow-up and the stigma of being "just a volunteer" hindered their teaching effectiveness. The Community-School Synergy Dialogues aim to transform this dynamic by facilitating structured, positive interactions between parents and volunteer educators. By showcasing the educators' dedication and clarifying assessment rubrics, the initiative aims to build mutual respect and dismantle the "volunteer stigma." Supportive Literature: Epstein et al. (2023) highlight that robust family-school partnerships are foundational to student success, but these partnerships fail when there is a deficit of trust regarding the teacher's professional status. Lau and Lee (2021) further argue that schools must actively intervene to legitimize non-traditional or volunteer educators in the eyes of the community, as institutional backing significantly enhances parental cooperation and respect.

Lastly, to combat the profound emotional exhaustion and financial stress reported by the participants, the intervention includes structured Peer-Support and Wellness Circles. Rather than leaving teachers to cope individually through informal "mindful breaks," this institutionalizes self-care. It provides a safe, scheduled space for educators to debrief, share adaptive strategies, and receive psychological first aid. As such, the importance of structural support for teacher well-being has been heavily emphasized in recent educational psychology literature. Sokal et al. (2020) found that peer-supported networks act as a critical buffer against emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Gu and Day (2022) similarly conclude that teacher resilience is not merely an individual trait but a socially constructed capacity; regular, structured peer interactions foster the relational trust and intrinsic motivation necessary to sustain educators in high-needs environments.

Based on the thematic synthesis of the participants' lived experiences, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The persistent lack of digital and physical learning resources in the district disproportionately shifts the financial burden of education onto volunteer teachers, who frequently subsidize institutional gaps with their own limited funds.
2. Student disengagement, absenteeism, and assessment difficulties are not merely pedagogical issues but are deeply rooted in the learners' socioeconomic constraints, such as the necessity to work for family survival and cognitive fatigue.
3. The designation of being a "volunteer" or temporary educator carries a latent stigma that fractures home-school partnerships, leading to a deficit of trust and inconsistent follow-up from parents.
4. In the absence of standardized materials and adequate instructional time, the success of the curriculum relies heavily on the spontaneous pedagogical improvisation and adaptive expertise of the individual teacher.
5. While volunteer educators utilize strong intrinsic motivation and peer networks to cope with immense emotional and physical strain, relying solely on individual psychological resilience without institutional intervention is an unsustainable model that risks severe educator burnout.

Implications for Practice, Policy, and Future Research

The findings of this study carry significant implications for educational policy and institutional practice. Primarily, the reliance on volunteer educators to fund their own teaching materials highlights an urgent need for localized material subsidies and shared learning resource banks. As Carvalho et al. (2020) emphasize, unmitigated out-of-pocket expenses for basic classroom supplies rapidly accelerate teacher burnout and exacerbate

educational inequities. District administrators and Local Government Units (LGUs) must transition from viewing volunteer teachers as supplementary help to recognizing them as core instructional assets requiring dedicated financial and material allocations.

Furthermore, the study suggests a serious need to actively dismantle the stigma surrounding the "volunteer" status to foster better community-school partnerships. Schools must intentionally validate and elevate the professional standing of these educators in the eyes of the community, as institutional legitimization is directly tied to increased parental trust and student engagement (Lau & Lee, 2021; Epstein et al., 2023). Additionally, because learner disengagement is heavily tied to diverse ages and socio-economic fatigue, professional development for these educators must move beyond basic curriculum orientations. Training must specifically target contextualized pedagogy, such as structured gamification and proactive differentiated instruction, which have been proven to reduce cognitive load and boost behavioral engagement in marginalized learners (Tomlinson, 2021; Wang et al., 2021).

Finally, the emotional toll documented in this study underscores the necessity of formalizing mental health and peer-support structures within the school district. While teachers currently rely on informal "mindful breaks," literature confirms that institutionalized peer-support networks and wellness programs act as the most robust buffers against emotional exhaustion in high-needs environments (Gu & Day, 2022). Future research should consider conducting a longitudinal study to measure the long-term retention rates of these volunteer educators and evaluate the direct impact of implemented support interventions on their pedagogical effectiveness.

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