

The Voices that Cannot Be Heard: A Phenomenological Study on the Lived Experiences of Deaf Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Employment is described as life-changing for Deaf people. To date, they have few and limited employment opportunities. This phenomenological study focuses on exploring deaf teachers' lived experiences. It is crucial that we gain a better understanding of deaf teachers' experience to generate a new area of focus on deaf people in the employment field. To gain insight into the nature of deaf teachers' occupational experience, a focus group interview was conducted with 3 deaf teachers. Participants were gathered through chain referral sampling, also known as snowballing, where the researcher's chosen participant recruits other participants who might participate in the study. The analysis of the data led to the emergence of six essential themes: (1) professional and personal attribution; (2) equality and inclusion in the workplace; (3) feeling of belongingness and relatedness; (4) support provider; (5) job satisfaction and motivation; and (6) difficulty and challenges. Findings of the study suggest that deaf teachers' positive working environment and experience can be influenced by professional identity, personal attribution, accommodation, and inclusive practices, relatedness to significant others, support and network, job satisfaction and motivation, and ability to adapt to difficulties and challenges.

Keywords — Social Science, deaf teachers, phenomenological approach, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

As cited by Hiranandani (2005) in his critical theory of disability, he noted that throughout history, people with disabilities (PWD) struggle to live a functional, productive, and independent life due to stigma, discrimination, and lack of social support. Besides these interpersonal barriers, most laws, policies, and societal norms discredit PWD's as dependent, functionally limited, and cannot perform a task or work independently, making them "unfit" or unable to work. Since the 1970s, the growth of self-organization of people with disabilities has led to a redefinition of disability as a social structure: social, cultural, political, and environmental barriers have been emphasized as more disabling than physical or cognitive disabilities. The modern world presents many differentiated challenges. Therefore, senses are constantly being troubled with new sensations, environments, and experiences, coping strategies that allow us to move with confidence and deal with these challenges without getting overwhelmed. That is a major task for many of us. It is a monumental challenge for others, especially the disabled (Harvest, 2014). At work, people with hearing loss have more difficulty finding employment and struggling with certain practical aspects, such as attending group meetings or answering the phone (Harvest, 2014). Employers are another barrier. According to the National Association of the Deaf (2000), employer attitudes create the largest barrier to job opportunities. Schroedel and Geyer cited studies that communications stress, social isolation, and unsupportive supervisors are among the difficulties faced by many deaf and hard-hearing workers (National Research Council, 2004). Knowledge and employment are described as life-changing for disabled people. Education nurtures confidence and fosters independence by leading the way to work. It also means enabling people with hearing impairment to learn, train, and prove themselves at work (Harvest et al., 2014). The United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006) ensures and promotes the full realization of PWD's human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination on the basis of disability, and taking action to maximize the resources available to achieve the full realization of economic, social, and cultural rights.

In the Philippines, Filipino deaf advocacy efforts experienced a major breakthrough in 1991, when President Corazon Aquino passed R.A. 7277, also known as the "Magna Carta for People with Disabilities." Filipino's most

comprehensive legislation, R.A. 7277 promotes equal opportunities for suitable employment for PWDs. Sadly, Magna Carta's full effect has yet to be felt. To date, few and limited support services are available to the Deaf, especially in the workforce. Even then, those who are currently part of the workforce are more the exception as many deaf people remain steadily unemployed (Success and the Filipino Deaf Employee: A Manual for Working with the Deaf, n.d.). Schelzig (2005) estimated that only less than 10 percent of more than 100,000 employable DOLE-registered PWDs were employed. While governments, organizations, and individuals have expressed a willing interest in promoting and supporting these groups of people, there are still invisible barriers to equal access to employment as regular individuals normally enjoy.

While there have been studies made about the employment of PWDs in recent years, there has been very little attention focused on the phenomenon of deaf teachers. The course of this study is inclined and committed to systematically explore the essence of the lived experience of deaf teachers. This study attempts to investigate issues surrounding deaf teachers, such as the condition of their employment, the process, and procedures of employment, the nature of challenges, opportunities, and condition of their working environment. In general, this study aims to explore a phenomenon, the occupational experience as lived by deaf teachers. As the world rapidly changes, more focus and opportunities should have been given for deaf people in the area of sustainable employment, thus creating even more meaningful lives. When little is known about the lived experiences of deaf teachers, research such as this attempts to offer broader insights into the immense potential of deaf people to have productive lives through employment because their experience may provide us with a better understanding of our own experiences as regular individuals who would not need to endure prejudice or discrimination or unequal treatment as indirectly imposed by societal norms to people with disabilities. Therefore, there is a great need to expand knowledge in this area and help to provide information for future studies to enhance future opportunities for deaf people.

FRAMEWORK

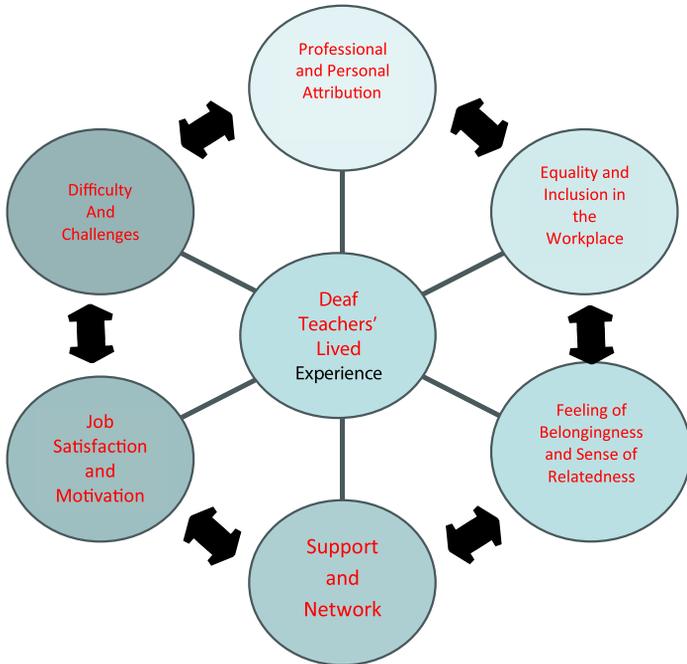


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework. The emergence of six themes represents the overall structures of deaf teachers' lived experience.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary research question to be answered in this study is, “What is the essence of deaf teachers' lived experience?” The main objective of this qualitative study is to explore the occupational experiences of deaf teachers through rich and pure descriptive data of their own experiences. The secondary objective is to generate new knowledge in the area of teachers who are deaf. This new knowledge can generate awareness to understand the experiences of deaf teachers in the context of identifying the challenges and working conditions of persons who are deaf with the intent to improve their working experience. Additionally, this new knowledge may create a new area of focus to serve as a benchmark to generate interest and knowledge about deaf people in the field of employment.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Sloan and Bowe (2014) cited methodology as a general way to research a topic, whereas method is the technique(s) used. Qualitative methodologies differ from quantitative methodologies. Qualitative methodologies seek to portray a socially-built, complex, and ever-changing real world. Therefore, qualitative methodological approaches tend to be based on deeply recognizing and describing the subjective, experiential human life-world. In addition to the practicality of qualitative research, observation of socially-constructed reality is applicable and human scientists prefer qualitative research for its main features such as text as data focus, meaning, and/or interpretation. It also seeks to understand a specific research problem or topic from a representative's perspective.

Descriptive phenomenology was an appropriate method to explore deaf teachers' lived experiences. Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio (2019) defined phenomenology as a research approach aimed at describing the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who experienced it. The goal of phenomenology is to describe and understand the meaning of this experience both as to what was experienced and how it was experienced (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019; Wilson, 2015). In phenomenology, the researcher collects data from individuals experiencing a specific phenomenon. The data is analyzed and organized, and the researcher develops a composite description of the experience's essence for all individuals (Yüksel, & Yildirim, 2015).

Research Site

Participants of this study were purposefully selected based on predetermined and specific criteria. Each participant had at least one year of experience being a deaf teacher. A chosen participant or informant of the researcher was contacted through personal contact and also being the one who recruited other participants who happened to be her co-teachers in one of the private deaf schools in Sta. Rosa City, Laguna, Philippines.

During the interviews, it was found out that all of the participants were graduates of the Deaf Evangelical Alliance Foundation (DEAF) Inc., a non-profit organization that focuses on the education of hearing-impaired Filipinos which offered Bachelor of Elementary Education with Sign Language as their only and primary program. One of the participants had experience working in Lamoiyan

Corporation, private company makers of a known Filipino brand of toothpaste. Two of them had been teachers since right after they graduated from DEAF. All of the participants might have a different experience in terms of tenure and years of experience. However, there was a similarity with regards to their educational background, the employment process, and the nature of teaching experience and relevant training.

Participants

Participant selection is the first step in data gathering (Giorgi, 2009). Sampling stems directly from the idea that the sample can be statistically related to the general population, i.e., the sample should represent the population (Englander, 2012). However, to ensure that the sample's representativeness is indicative of the general population, purposeful sampling would be used. The major premise of purposive sampling is to find a group of participants according to predetermined criteria relevant to a particular research question; thus, it is vital to reflect on this question: "Does the subject belong to the study population?" The phenomenological researcher is not primarily interested in knowing how many or how often one experience has had. Therefore, when selecting subjects for phenomenological research, the question the researcher must ask is: "Do you have the experience I am looking for?" The phenomenological method in human science recommends that at least three participants be used, obviously not because the number three corresponds to statistical analysis, but because one or two subjects would be too difficult for the researcher to handle in terms of his own imagination (Giorgi, 2009). As Giorgi (2009) points out, "Research-based sampling strategies should not be confused with research-based strategies."

Through snowballing, also known as chain referral sampling, participants were selected (Bagheri & Saadati, 2015; Naderifar, Goli & Ghalijsae, 2017). A selected researcher participant or informant was contacted through personal contact. The participant with whom contact had already been made used her social networks to refer to researchers and others who might participate in or contribute to the study. The target participant, who was currently employed as a deaf teacher at the time of the study, and also the one who encouraged co-teachers who were deaf to participate in the study. Participants recruited expressed their willingness to be part of this study. Participants varied in terms of tenure. One participant taught for ten years. The other two had one and three years' experience, respectively.

Table 1. Profiles of the Participants

Name	Gender	Age	Years of Experience as a Deaf teacher
Jeffrey*	Male	35	10
Crista*	Female	26	3
Anita*	Female	28	1

*Pseudonyms were substituted to the participants' true names to protect their identity

Research Ethics Protocol

The overall goal of this qualitative study was to discover a deeper and richer understanding of deaf teachers' experiences through a subjective view of their own experiences. One of the benefits to the participants is a richer understanding of the personal meanings they and the world may not have fully understood or come to understand. Klinger (2004) further points out that maintaining the voices of participants in research as much as possible is important. This is one of the ethical advantages of a phenomenological approach. Participants controlled the information and how it was depicted. The participants were not obliged to disclose any information they were reluctant to share. Informed consent and written agreement were provided to establish limitation and boundary on the data and information collection. The purpose and data gathering procedures and other relevant aspects such as date prior to actual interview, benefits and risks to participation, and confidentiality were carefully explained to them via a sign language expert.

Instrumentation

Questions in a phenomenological interview should meet description criteria (Giorgi, 2009). In a technical sense, it is not a traditional question that initiates the interview, but the interviewer who asks the participant to describe a situation where the participant experienced the phenomenon. The researcher was interested in the meaning of the phenomenon experienced by deaf teachers, but their situation provided context and meanings were context-dependent (Englander, 2012). Englander (2012) further points out that the initial phase of the phenomenological research process begins by acknowledging the need to understand a phenomenon from the point of view of experience in order to discover its meaning. Hence, the research purpose is formulated in which the researcher aims to discover the meaning of a particular phenomenon. This study utilized the long interview approach and/or semi-structured interview in which

the central question leads the participants to describe as detailed as possible a situation in which they experienced a phenomenon. This gave essence to a phenomenon being experienced by deaf teachers.

In addition to the central question, follow-up questions were asked to obtain additional data on lived experience. Questions like, “Tell me what it is like to be a deaf teacher?” “What are the challenges and some barriers you have faced from being a deaf teacher?” and “What are the joys and disappointments of being a deaf teacher?” were asked until rich and pure descriptions were obtained from the interviews. A semi-structured, focus group approach was used to allow participants to develop their perceived experience freely without researcher intervention. A structured format was given the least option.

The first data collection phase involved a preliminary meeting with research participants before the actual interview. Approximately two weeks before the interview. In a preliminary meeting, participants were gathered and signed an interview consent form, giving permission to use the interview data for this study. A sign language practitioner assisted the researcher to carefully explain the purpose and data gathering procedures and other relevant aspects such as date prior to the actual interview, benefits, and confidentiality. The participants were reviewed during the initial meeting to give them ample time to dwell and ponder on the experience.

The interview became the main process throughout data collection. Phenomenological, human-scientific researchers tend to choose the interview because of their interest in a phenomenon’s meaning as other subjects see it (Englander, 2012). Also, Giorgi (2009) states that a traditional face-to-face interview would be one way to gather data from another about a person’s experience. This method implies that the phenomenological research interview is a description of a participant’s experience as complete as possible. The interview was the starting point for data collection. Interviews were videotaped.

Due to the nature of the participants’ communications in sign language, all interviews were videotaped entirely. The length of one-to-two hours was suggested to cover the entire interview process agreed by the participants. The interviews were transcribed into text by the researcher, requiring the help of an outsourced sign language interpreter who looked at the overall videotaped communication, including body gestures and facial expressions vital to understanding the participants’ entire responses. Since some sensitive contents unintentionally derived from the interview data, such as issues relating to poor compensation and participants’ working conditions, precautionary measures were implemented allowing participants to use pseudonyms and identifying markers such as school

name and administrator were omitted from the original transcript to protect the identity of the participants. An opportunity was set for a final meeting, allowing participants to verify and check the accuracy of the transcribed data. Participants had the option of receiving a video copy of the recorded interview and hardcopy of the transcribed data if they wanted it to be available. No participants asked for copies. They requested the omission of identifying details that would link them to an organization that might compromise their identity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary research question to be answered in this study is, “What is the essence of deaf teachers’ lived experience”? To be able to answer the research problem, the researcher has gathered three deaf participants based on specific criteria. This study involved deaf participants who were teachers during the time this study was being conducted. They varied in terms of a number of years and experience in teaching, but at least they should have a minimum of 1 year of experience in teaching deaf students.

The study participants described being a deaf teacher as a complex, dynamic experience. The nature of their experience’s complexity had led to the emergence of distinctive themes. Six themes emerged from the pure, descriptive data derived from all the interviews representing the essence of the deaf teachers’ lived experience. The first theme described the professional aspect of their experiences that included their selected career, qualification, and personal credentials. The second theme defined the nature of their experiences in the school administration’s job process, accessibility and accommodation practices, and how they were treated as employees. The third theme elaborated on the aspect of their relationship with students, deaf co-teachers, and hearing. The fourth theme discussed the need to connect and access through community and government programs, and support from their immediate networks like family and friends. The fifth theme illustrated their work motivation and satisfaction, which were vital in establishing positive work experience. Lastly, the sixth theme outlined their major challenges and difficulties as deaf educators and as people in a predominantly hearing society. Below are the major and subordinate themes.

Lived Experiences of Deaf Teachers	Professional and Personal Attribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of One's Job Fulfilment of Professional Qualification Esteem and Self-Concept
	Equality and Inclusion in the Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment Process Accommodation Practices Access to Head and Superior Fair Treatment
	Feeling of Belongingness and Sense of Relatedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deaf Teacher-Student Relationship Deaf Teacher-Deaf Teacher Relationship Deaf Teacher-Hearing Teacher Relationship
	Support and Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediate Environs Community Linkages Government Intervention
	Job Satisfaction and Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passion for Work Drives and Perseverance Benefits and Compensation
	Difficulty and Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source of Frustration Social and Communication Work-Related Struggles Limited or Lack of Occupational Opportunities

Figure 2. The major themes and subordinate themes derived from deaf teachers' lived experiences

The pure and descriptive data collected and analyzed qualitatively could be summed up to six themes that emerged from the text transcription derived from all of the interviews, which represented the essence of the lived experience of the deaf teachers. Theme analysis led to the development of six findings:

(1) *The role of education and personal attribution in deaf teachers' occupational experiences.* This implies the importance of professional identity and career education to the belief that skilled and trained teachers are in the teaching profession. Education and relevant training were instrumental in securing a job in the teaching profession. Deaf teachers see their career education as the basis for teaching and practice. All deaf teachers were BEED graduates with Sign Language and rendered relevant training in Deaf schools during their college training. Education deaf graduates may be more likely to end up in teaching. This formed the basis for choosing teaching as a career.

According to Goodson, Moore, and Hargreaves (2006), professional identity and teacher preparation affect perceptions of teacher beliefs significantly. Darling-Hammond and Berry (2006) noted that to perform well, teaching is a profession requiring considerable learning skills. Good teachers need content knowledge and the ability to manage a classroom and design lessons for a diverse student mix (Dunn, 2008).

Participants also called their students as determinants to influence their longevity and resilience motivation. They expressed genuine love and concern, looking for their best interest. They truly understand the situations of their students and see their students in them because they were once students who also endured socially-imposed challenges in a predominantly hearing society. They regarded teaching deaf students as passion and vocation.

This is in line with Gu and Day (2013), whose findings indicate that among the factors influencing teacher resilience are “the positive effects of teacher impact on student life.” The professional identity included areas that teachers described as giving them a sense of general activity and value in their profession: (a) why they teach, (b) great ideas and concepts, (c) classroom tone, (d) make a difference in society, and (e) connect and motivate students (Dunn, 2008).

Participants offered insights into the impact of teaching deaf students on their commitment to helping students progress despite the negative experiences of teaching disabled learners. Participants in this study align with Collier’s (2005) notion that “a caring teacher is committed to his students. The teacher, in other words, accepts responsibility for student performance, whether it involves success or failure” (p. 354). Although participants often reflected on their students’ challenges, participants identified that teaching deaf students took passion and love. This became one of their resilience reasons. Teaching them takes a lot of passion and love reinforces Collier’s (2005) finding that teachers who care “spend considerable time and energy to nurture and sustain each student” (p. 355). Smith (2005) concluded that individual beliefs and values are a combination of countless life experiences. Teacher beliefs are founded, shaped, and reinforced through early personal experiences as students, formal teacher training, teaching experiences, and cultural backgrounds (as cited in Dunn, 2008).

Participants also believed that they, deaf teachers, should have the ultimate ability and devotion to patiently teach deaf students because they once became deaf students who had experienced compassion and care from deaf teachers. They believe that if there is someone who can love and care for deaf children, it is deaf in the person of a teacher. Students are determinants to influence the longevity and resilience motivation of deaf teachers. It takes a personal value and a strong commitment to the sake of their students, which reinforced their desire to choose this type of profession. It is found that the most influential factor of deaf teachers in teaching is the personal ascription of their perceived role as primary educators for deaf students.

(2) *The role of accommodation and inclusion in deaf teachers' occupational experiences.* Participants in this study viewed the school head and administrator's accommodation practices positively. They felt satisfied with their superior's accessibility privilege, as this is important in developing a positive working environment and experiences. This study found that deaf teachers aspired to have an intimate relationship with their school head far beyond a typical subordinate-superior relationship. This is in line with Berry's (2012) findings that teachers' satisfaction with their work environments is correlated with the following factors: (a) the helpfulness of administrator support, (b) whether administrators and general education teachers understood the roles and responsibilities of special educators, and (c) teachers' shared responsibility for the education of students (p.12). Cunningham (2015) studied resilience factors for teachers and found that a positive relationship with an administrator reinforces participants to excel in their duties; when they perceived a negative disconnect, they often described feeling isolated and had a negative impact on their experience.

Besides accessibility to superiors and administrators, it is imperative that workers feel fair treatment among organization members. Green (2011) identified "workload issues" with low morale and increased attrition. Participants also expressed their feelings of receiving a lower salary compared to their hearing counterparts. Injustice or unfair employee compensation distribution is an influential factor in a teacher's decision to leave the job. Furthermore, participants were dismayed with the kind of work distribution and compensation treatment. It was noted that deaf teachers must perform multi-classes. Inciting their own experiences, they commented on the unfair distribution of salaries between deaf and hearing teachers as they receive lower salaries than those of counterparts. This is congruent with Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond's (2017) findings that accountability expectations and salary contribute to the attrition problems of teachers. This discusses the greater role of equal treatment as an influential factor for the positive work experiences of deaf teachers.

(3) *The role of relatedness and belongingness in deaf teachers' occupational experiences.* Participants shared that it was through becoming teachers they would find and feel a sense of relatedness. They shared that being together with people having the same situation as them, made them capable of extending their network, giving them the opportunity for interaction and communication in a method which is obviously visual in nature, thus giving them a sense of relatedness. In support of this, Cunningham (2015) found that teachers described their personal connections to their students who have special needs and how this influenced

their long-term commitment. Participants shared that it was their connections to the students that made them better teachers, and connections to the students were motivators to persevere.

Participants emphasized relationships with co-teachers. However, they have a smooth and sound relationship with each other, negatively viewing the relationship with hearing co-teachers. They felt isolated as if the participants described division among deaf and hearing teachers. The kind of relationship they had with co-hearing teachers affected their emotional well-being, resulting in distress and tarnishing the supposedly healthy social network and the relationship they hoped they had with them. A supportive and positive relationship is an integral part of the teaching experience. Good peer relationships yield positive work experience and environment, resulting in improved morale and resilience. As Cunningham (2015) noted, positive and supportive relationships with professional peers are crucial in resilience. As cited by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018), positive and supportive social relations with colleagues and school administration involve commitment and job satisfaction, but also well-being and lower burnout levels. Schlichte, Yssel and Merbler (2005) concluded that “strongly forged relationships and emotional well-being are protective and critical to retention” (p. 39).

An encouraging and compassionate relationship is important for motivation and job satisfaction, as Jones, Youngs and Frank (2013) noted that teacher relationships with their colleagues in general education are important to help them overcome the challenges they face. They added, “Colleague support perception was a strong predictor of retention plans” (p. 365). Daily experiences with coworkers, students, and administrators also influence teachers’ beliefs, and those with positive experiences are more likely to remain to teach (Darling-Hammond 2007, Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Further, a common understanding among and between teachers and school administration, and as a set of common teacher practices, was positively associated with self-concept and job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

(4) The role of support and network in deaf teachers’ occupational experiences. Being disabled, participants felt isolated from their community and the people around them. This suggests an existing gap between them and the community due to their communication and interaction deficit. This intensified their desire to be included in community programs and activities to break this invisible barrier. Inclusion in community programs and activities breaks this invisible barrier. Cunningham (2015) found the importance of being connected to the school and neighborhood community as influencing teachers’ decision to stay. Henkin

and Holliman (2009) also concluded, “Commitment is linked to the idea that strongly committed people to identify, participate and enjoy membership in an organization.”

Participants also shared their feelings with local and national governments. They did not intend to discredit the government, but their current situation intensified their desire to be heard by the government and eventually led to policies being implemented for people with disabilities. Government provisions and laws promoting the welfare of deaf teachers in the area of employment make them feel secure and, in turn, can lead to positive self-esteem and valued self and dignified lives. Having a positive view of one’s ability and self-efficacy is vital to becoming a productive and contributing member of society, in effect, can lead to a positive view of self-worth and self-concept.

Participants also commented on the slackness of government intervention to provide sustainable, equal opportunities for deaf people. They sought government action to enact mandates and policies to implement full and equal opportunities for disabled people. Participants were unaware of the existing “Magna Carta for the Disabled” law.

(5) *The role of job satisfaction and motivation in deaf teachers’ occupational experiences.* In this study, it is found that numerous factors could influence a teacher’s desire to stay long in a belonging organization. Deaf teachers identified several factors ranging from compensation, network support, technical work difficulties, etc. One of the factors that had been given greater emphasis was the care and concern of participants for students who also endured being disabled people. This finding supports Gholami and Tirri’s (2012) finding that caring teachers know their students well to meet their needs, desires, and struggles. They concluded that the core personal care of teachers corresponds to nurturing the entire character of students as humans.

Findings also revealed that the teacher’s compensation and benefits are important factors in the positive consideration and factor of staying in the job. Most participants expressed dissatisfaction with their current salary, leading to poor resilience and low morale. All participants had thought of finding a new job or opportunity outside their organization that would offer better compensation. What worsens the situation is that teachers receive higher salaries than deaf teachers. This finding supports that of Gilpin (2011), who concluded that the difference in teacher wages mostly affected the decision to leave teaching by teachers with less than six years of teaching experience. This finding also reinforces Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, and Whitener’s conclusion that turnover decreases as teacher pay rises (as cited in Cunningham, 2015).

(6) *The role of difficulty and challenges in deaf teachers' occupational experiences.* Teachers inevitably experience negative challenges and difficulties that might lead them to question their desire to stay in the job. Participants' major challenges included the frustration of passing the licensing examination, communication and socialization difficulties with the belonging community, lack of opportunities for training and seminars, and limited job opportunities outside their own organization. Hargreaves and Fullan (2015) noted that a good investment for quality teaching requires thorough teachers' preparation and continuous development (p. 3). Darling-Hammond (2006) concludes that teachers who are fully prepared are better able to promote student achievement than teachers who are not fully prepared, whether formal training or having adequate resources for the job.

As Darling-Hammond, Hylar, and Gardner (2017) noted, professional development is vital for becoming an effective teacher. Throughout their career, teachers improved their self-efficacy perceptions by developing more skills for their jobs. This confirms the findings of Cochran-Smith (2004) and Darling-Hammond (2006) that prepared teachers are more able to meet their job demands. This is consistent with Suell and Piotrowski's (2006) finding that teachers who are new to a field need to prepare before entering a classroom. Teachers needed to know their managers were willing to invest in their teachers' growth and development (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Although it was ultimately the teacher's responsibility to seek career development opportunities, administrators needed to be willing to pay for substitutes and leave time to attend (Dunn, 2008).

Work-related problems are inevitable. Teaching deaf children seemed to challenge deaf teachers. Participants raised and presented student-factor issues such as comprehension problems, absences, poor performance, and negative behaviors. Participants tried to devise effective strategies and classroom management to cope with these student-related issues. Classroom challenges and difficulties can affect the ability and efficiency of deaf teachers to develop effective strategies and classroom management to address classroom issues and concerns. This is consistent with Stephenson, West, Westerlund, and Nelson's (2003) belief that chaos and dysfunction often result from the stress of managing a large number of students' complex dynamics. The ability to cope with these challenges may determine why some teachers are successful (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Stress and poor stress management are considered a top reason teachers leave the profession (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017). Learning

to find satisfaction within their limits can be job satisfaction and frustration difference (Day, Stobart & Sammons, 2006). Teachers with an understanding of culture and climate are more likely to find ways to manage their classrooms successfully (Dunn, 2008).

Deaf participants highlighted the problem with barriers between them and the community due to communication and socialization deficits. They appealed to the community to be more responsive and receptive to their existence. They suggested generating programs to enable their participation in societal activities. Deaf teachers assumed that being connected to the community they work in and the ability to participate in their programs and activities would yield to progressive and productive community members and affect the well-being of deaf people.

Participants discussed their frustration in passing the teachers' licensure exam. They wanted a teaching position in the public school system, and this was only possible by passing the board exam. They could just identify themselves as professionals. Two of the participants revealed they tried the licensure examination and failed. They commented that the examination was difficult for them to understand. They sought a modification to suit their special needs in the provisions of Senate Bill 2118 (2014), also known as "An Act Declaring Filipino Sign Language as the National Sign Language of the Filipino Deaf," stating and directing the PRC to take affirmative action by administering alternative assessment procedures that consider the Deaf 's conditions and abilities and be language-appropriate and culture-fair to Deaf education graduates. This act also directs DepEd to use affirmative action to recruit deaf persons using FSL (Section 4c). It is found that deaf teachers were unaware of the existing procedure in creating a modified licensing examination for deaf graduates and their ability to work in DepEd. Deaf participants experienced this frustration in line with Day's et al. (2006) remarks, "When teachers begin to feel unable to meet their students' needs, it causes frustration, and they become dissatisfied not only professionally but personally with their jobs." Professional identification and eligibility are integral to the life goals of deaf teachers.

CONCLUSION

The positive working environment and experience of deaf teachers are influenced by professional identity, personal attribution, perceived accommodation and inclusive practices, relatedness and belonging to significant

others, support and network, job satisfaction and motivation, and ability to adapt to difficulties and challenges.

The occupational well-being and welfare of deaf teachers are guaranteed through provisions of viable measures such as upgrading their education and skills training, providing equitable accommodation and inclusion in the workplace, expanding their support group and network, breaking the negative perceptions about their occupational limitations, expanding access to flexible working opportunities, and ensuring the comprehensive implementation of government's legal policies and mandates aiming for the development of enhanced occupational opportunities of deaf teachers.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

Study findings may best be translated into various communication media for information dissemination, if not further awareness or advocacy campaigns. Results must be forwarded to relevant Philippine national and local government agencies to ensure the welfare and well-being of deaf teachers and proactively intensify the implementation of existing legal provisions that aim to protect and safeguard the rights of deaf people in general.

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