

Pinpointing Challenges and Resilience: A Poignant Narrative Inquiry of Early-Career Teachers in Abra

Santos Rafael C. Bargas ¹

1 – Abra State Institute of Sciences and Technology

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to examine the lived experiences of early-career teachers in Abra, focusing on different challenges they encounter and resilience strategies they employ to overcome them. Using a narrative inquiry approach, it captures in-depth, personal accounts of their early teaching years, highlighting issues such as heavy workloads, classroom management, administrative responsibilities, emotional stress, and limited professional support.

Through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, the research aims to understand how these teachers manage professional demands and the internal and external support systems that sustain their motivation and well-being. It emphasizes not only the struggles but also growth, adaptability, and resilience demonstrated by early-career educators.

It further examines the role of mentorship, institutional resources, and professional development opportunities in fostering resilience. By amplifying teachers' voices, it identifies key factors that either support or hinder their success in the field.

The findings target to inform the development of policies and support structures that enhance teacher effectiveness and retention. Ultimately, the study aspires to contribute to a more empathetic and supportive educational environment—one that empowers early-career teachers in Abra to face the realities of the profession with strength, confidence, and hope.

Keywords: *Resilience and Challenges, Early-career Teachers, Semi-structured In-Depth Interviews, Narrative inquiry approach*



I. INTRODUCTION

Early career teachers often face a unique set of difficulties, ranging from adapting to new environments, managing classroom dynamics, navigating administrative expectations, to dealing with limited resources. The importance of this study lies in its potential to inform educational policy and teacher training programs by shedding light on the specific needs of novice teachers in rural and underserved areas, where challenges might differ from those encountered in more urbanized settings. By understanding these challenges and how teachers build resilience, educational stakeholders can better support and retain early career educators, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes.

Teachers' resilience is not static and fixed at a point. It develops over time as teachers surmount challenges. Thus, teachers are aware of their values, thoughts, purpose, and connections with others, especially when they are in the face of adversities (Kurniawan, 2019). Strategies for teacher resilience are contextual, and may even appear to be counterproductive in terms of meeting professional obligations. Appreciation of small acts of resilience and care showed by the teachers boosted their morale and enthusiasm to strive harder in an effort to create school improvements. Therefore, the hardships encountered in their daily work practices can only be understood when teachers are presented with opportunities to share actual mechanisms that keep them going and the resilient strategies they employ for successful adaptation to the profession (Wabule, 2020). As stated in the findings of Galea (2014), teachers also shared common factors that fostered their resilience in overcoming the setbacks they experienced in their profession. Teachers found that individual qualities such as a positive attitude, seeing mistakes as learning opportunities, accepting one's limitations, adapting lessons to student needs, investing in firm but caring relationships, and remaining calm when responding to challenging behaviour, as well as contextual factors such as support within the school system helped develop their resilience. Thus, teachers face challenges (Fernet et al., 2012) such as intense day-to-day stress and have a higher likelihood of burnout than many other professions.

Understanding teacher resilience as a multi-faceted and dynamic construct enables the empowerment of teachers' commitment and effectiveness (Le et al., 2022, June). Moreover, years of teaching experience can be considered an important variable from the aspect of teacher resilience and it is important to pay increased attention especially to novice teachers' well-being and building their resilience, e.g., by providing guidance through developing effective coping strategies (Barnová, 2023). It is acknowledged that teachers have a valuable capability to preserve their wellness and respond resiliently to professional obstacles. It is really important to note that we need to better understand how to enhance teacher wellbeing as a driving source for personal and professional flourishing. Ultimately, this will contribute to the profession as a whole because it can lead to an empowering of teachers to care for their students, create positive learning environments, commit to the role of education, and support a learning society (Hascher et al., 2021).

Teacher resilience has a crucial role to play in teaching and teacher education all around the world. However, few practical attempts have been made to systematically improve and (re)build this characteristic in teachers. Teacher resilience or the ability to stand against the natural stressors and setbacks in teaching as a tough profession is of utmost importance in all educational arenas in that it can generate numerous positive outcomes. More specifically, resiliency produces job satisfaction, responsiveness, and effectiveness Wang (2021). In an ever-challenging teaching environment, professional learning and development constitute a never-



ending process for teachers. Reflection enables individual teachers to undergo this process. Therefore, individual teachers are encouraged to document their feelings, emotions, actions and coping strategies when they encounter stress and challenges to conduct a self-narrative study to identify their personal and contextual strengths. In addition, early career teachers must comprehend the pivotal roles of factors within each ecosystem in fostering resilience and leverage the resources available to overcome the challenges they encounter.

Fostering early career teachers' resilience to deal with setbacks and promoting their sustainable professional development (Duan, 2023). Teacher resilience must take account of both the context and circumstances of individual schools (especially those in economically disadvantaged communities) and the diversity of backgrounds and talents of early career teachers themselves. To improve early career teacher resilience demands a great deal of cooperation and support from governments, education systems, schools, universities and communities: teachers cannot do it alone (Johnson, 2015). Through developing and nurturing relationships that were mutual, empowering and encouraging, and by being the recipient of relationships that had these attributes, that the early career teachers' resilience appeared to be enhanced. The important personal and professional relationships that the early career teachers developed with their students, teaching colleagues, leaders, peers, family and friends, other professional staff, parents of students and themselves, all worked together to build their self-esteem and a positive teacher identity (Le Cornu, 2013). Teachers' thriving or resilience is best promoted by a combination of organisation-led and teacher-initiated efforts for developing social-emotional competence (Mansfield & Beltman, 2019).

Thus, it will explore the lived experiences of early-career teachers at Abra High School, Bangued Abra through a narrative inquiry approach. By exploring into their personal stories, it seeks to uncover the challenges they encounter, the resilience they demonstrate, and the insights they have gained. Through their voices, this research highlights the importance of resilience in the face of adversity the collective responsibility to foster supportive environments for these educators as they embark on their teaching career.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The research is structured around the principles of Resilience Theory (Richardson et al., 1990). Concept of resilience refers to a dynamical adaptive process that occurs when the individual experiences an interference. Consequently, it provides a framework for young teachers to study and understand the ways they master difficulties like carrying out different tasks, understanding the school environment, and keeping up their enthusiasm to teach. It mainly refers to the teachers' inner resources, social relationships, and the skills they have for dealing with problems or stress, which allow them to rebound, develop, and continue their work in spite of the difficulties, making it a solid base for the analysis of their resiliency paths.

Resiliency and resilience theory is presented as three waves of resiliency inquiry. The identification of resilient qualities was the first wave characterized through phenomenological identification of developmental assets and protective factors. The second wave described resilience as a disruptive and reintegrative process for accessing resilient qualities. The third wave exemplified the postmodern and multidisciplinary view of resilience, which is the force that drives a person to grow through adversity and disruptions. Application of resilience using an educational and practical framework provides a means for connecting with and nurturing a client's resilience (Richardson, (2002).

Moreover, it also utilized the theory of coping and emotion by Folkman and Lazarus (1991) focuses on the dynamic relationship between stress, coping strategies, and emotional responses. It views coping as a process that involves cognitive and behavioral efforts for managing specific external and internal demands that are exceeding one's resources. This theory emphasizes the role of individual appraisal in determining the type and effectiveness of coping strategies, thus showing how adaptive responses influence overall well-being. Also, it highlights the coping mechanisms, internal and external support systems that enable these teachers to persevere. By examining their narratives through the lens of resilience, the study can reveal the best strategies and factors contributing to their endurance and success while offering insights for improving teacher retention and professional development. Stress Management Theory, introduced by Yoesoep Edhie Rachmad in 2022, emerged from the need to understand and address the increasing stress in modern life. In a world filled with pressure and rapid change, stress has become a major issue affecting individual well-being and organizational performance. This theory was developed to provide guidance on effectively managing stress through a holistic approach that encompasses physical, emotional, and environmental aspects. Since, early-career teachers in Abra face unique stressors, such as adapting to new roles, dealing with resource constraints, and build resilience.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The researcher followed the paradigm outlined below in conducting the study. This paradigm served as a guiding framework that structured the entire research process, ensuring a systematic and organized approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

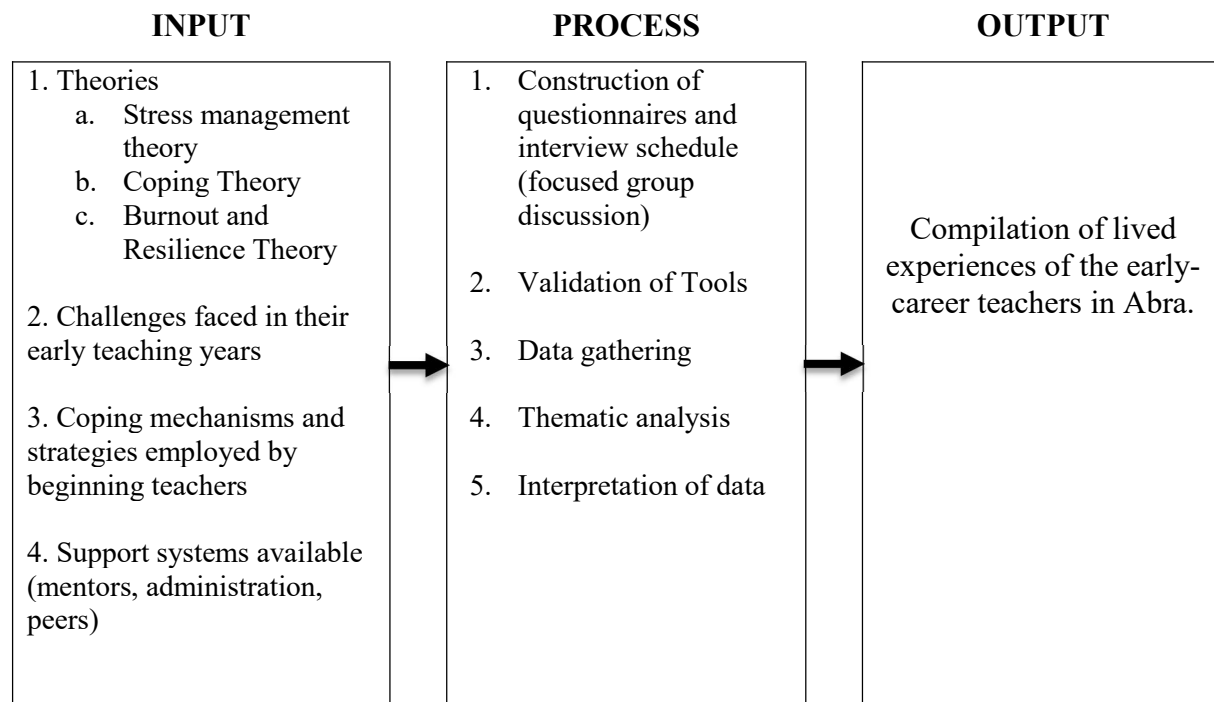


Figure 1. Research Paradigm



The conceptual framework is structured around a triadic research paradigm consisting of input, process, and output. This framework serves as a guiding structure that ensures the systematic organization of the research process, from the development of research tools to the final interpretation of findings. It allows the researcher to explore the lived experiences of early-career teachers by anchoring the study in both theoretical and empirical foundations.

At the core of the input phase are the theories that inform the study: Stress Management Theory, Coping Theory, and Burnout and Resilience Theory. These theoretical underpinnings provide the lens through which the experiences of beginning teachers are analyzed. Stress Management Theory emphasizes how individuals recognize and respond to stressors in their professional environment. Coping Theory, particularly the model developed by Lazarus and Folkman, identifies the types of coping mechanisms individuals employ—whether problem-focused or emotion-focused—highlighting how early-career teachers adjust to professional challenges. Meanwhile, Burnout and Resilience Theory captures the dual experiences of exhaustion and recovery, offering insights into how teachers either succumb to or overcome the pressures of the teaching profession.

In addition to these theories, the study considers three key empirical elements: the challenges faced by early-career teachers, their coping mechanisms and strategies, and the support systems available to them. These components represent the actual conditions and responses observed in the teaching field. Challenges may include classroom management, overwhelming workloads, inadequate teaching resources, learner behavior issues, and community expectations. Coping mechanisms vary and may involve mentoring relationships, time management, collaboration with peers, or self-reflection practices. The presence and strength of support systems—such as mentors, school heads, fellow teachers, and family—also play a vital role in fostering resilience among beginning teachers.

The process component of the framework outlines the methodological steps undertaken in the study. This begins with the construction and validation of research instruments, particularly questionnaires and interview schedules designed for focused group discussions (FGDs). Once validated, these tools are used for gathering qualitative data from early-career teachers across the province of Abra. Thematic analysis is then applied to interpret and categorize the data into meaningful themes that reflect the participants' experiences, both in terms of their struggles and their resilience. This analytic process ensures that the voices of the teachers are heard and authentically represented.

Finally, the output is a comprehensive compilation of the lived experiences of early-career teachers in Abra. These narratives capture the complexity of their journey, revealing how they navigate the challenges of their profession while cultivating resilience. The insights drawn from these stories aim to inform future teacher support programs, guide educational policy development, and contribute to academic discourse on teacher development and well-being.

In summary, this conceptual framework integrates relevant theories and real-world contexts, enabling the researcher to explore the challenges and resilience of early-career teachers through a narrative lens. It underscores the value of lived experiences in understanding professional growth and highlights the importance of support systems in shaping the future of the teaching workforce.



Statement of the Problem

The purpose was to explore the challenges faced by early-career teachers in the province of Abra and to understand how they built resilience in response to the different challenges they encountered.

Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What specific challenges encountered by early-career teachers in the province of Abra during the initial years of their teaching profession?;
2. What resilience strategies did early-career teachers employ to manage and overcome these challenges?;
3. What activities or interventions can be recommended for the development of a comprehensive resilience-building program for early-career teachers based on teachers' lived experiences?

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were made for this study on the challenges faced by early-career teachers in the province of Abra:

1. The instruments used in this study were valid and reliable;
2. The respondents answered the questions honestly and objectively;
3. The data gathered were valid and reliable.

II. MATERIALS and METHODS

Discussion of the research design, sampling procedure, data gathering instrument and procedures, and statistical treatment of the data that were utilized in the study are presented in this section.

Research Design

It employed a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing narrative inquiry as the primary approach. Narrative inquiry was deemed appropriate for this study as it centered on the collection and analysis of personal stories and lived experiences of early-career teachers. Through their narratives, the participants were able to convey the realities of their professional journeys, offering deep insights into the various challenges they encountered and the strategies they employed to navigate these difficulties. The use of narrative allowed for a richer, more nuanced understanding of how resilience developed and evolved throughout the formative years of their teaching careers. This design enabled the researcher to explore three main areas of inquiry: the specific challenges early-career teachers in the province of Abra faced during their initial years in the profession; the resilience strategies and coping mechanisms they employed to manage and overcome these challenges; and the recommended activities or interventions that could inform the development of a comprehensive resilience-building program based on their lived experiences.

Population and Locale of the Study

Respondents of this study were fifteen early-career teachers selected through purposive sampling. This sampling technique was employed to ensure that participants possessed relevant experiences aligned with the objectives of the study, specifically, having served within the early years of their teaching profession. The study was conducted at Abra High School during the School Year 2024–2025. Located in Bangued, the capital town of the province of Abra in the



Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Abra High School is recognized as one of the province's leading educational institutions committed to delivering quality secondary education.

Data Gathering Instrument

The researcher utilized a semi-structured interview guide as the primary data-gathering instrument to collect in-depth qualitative data on the challenges and resilience of early-career teachers. This approach was chosen to allow for flexibility in exploring personal narratives while ensuring that key thematic areas—such as lived experiences, coping mechanisms, support systems, and professional growth—were thoroughly addressed. The open-ended nature of the semi-structured format enabled participants to share their stories authentically, providing rich, detailed accounts that are essential to the narrative inquiry design of the study.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the interview guide, the researcher sought the expertise of research specialists and the study's research adviser. Their insights and recommendations were carefully considered in refining the content, structure, and clarity of the instrument. Additionally, the instrument underwent a process of content validation, where each question was reviewed for its relevance, coherence, and alignment with the study's objectives. Prior to actual data collection, the interview questions were subjected to a pilot review to assess their effectiveness in eliciting meaningful responses. Only after thorough review and formal approval by the research committee was the instrument finalized and administered to the selected respondents. This rigorous validation process ensured the trustworthiness of the data collected and the overall integrity of the research findings.

Data Gathering Procedure

To secure systematic and ethical collection of data, the researcher followed a multi-step process. After finalizing the semi-structured interview guide based on expert feedback and validation results, the researcher prepared the final version of the research instrument. This version reflected revisions recommended during the content and face validity evaluation conducted by a panel of experts and the research committee.

Subsequently, the researcher drafted a formal request letter addressed to the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Abra. This letter, duly signed and endorsed by the school principal, sought official permission to conduct interviews in selected schools where the identified early-career teacher participants were based. Upon approval from the SDO, the researcher presented the approved letter to the principals of the sampled schools to further secure authorization at the school level. During this stage, the purpose and scope of the study were clearly explained, including the voluntary nature of participation and the ethical safeguards in place.

After securing all necessary approvals, the researcher coordinated with the participants to schedule interviews at their convenience. Depending on situational factors such as accessibility and health protocols, interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via virtual platforms such as Zoom or Skype. Prior to each session, the researcher obtained informed consent, which included permission to record the interviews for transcription and analysis purposes. Each interview was designed to last between 45 minutes to 1 hour, providing ample time for participants to share detailed, open-ended responses and for the researcher to pose follow-up or clarifying questions when needed.



Following data collection, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. The resulting qualitative data were carefully organized, categorized, and subjected to thematic analysis. This process allowed the researcher to identify recurring themes, patterns, and unique insights related to the challenges and resilience of early-career teachers. The findings were then systematically tabulated, treated, and interpreted to align with the study's research questions and theoretical framework, ensuring the integrity and depth of the final analysis.

III. RESULT and DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the data gathered from the participants of the study, specifically focusing on their lived experiences and insights as beginning teachers. The purpose of this section is to give voice to the participants by presenting their narratives in a meaningful and structured way, thereby illuminating the various challenges, patterns, and themes that emerged during the research process. Rather than relying on numerical data or statistical tools, the study employs a qualitative approach to understand the depth and complexity of the participants' experiences within the educational environment.

Problem 1: What specific challenges were encountered by early-career teachers in the province of Abra during the initial years of their teaching profession?

Table 1: The Challenges Encountered by Early-Career Teachers along the Early Teaching Challenges Theme, The Challenges Encountered by Early-Career Teachers along the Instructional and Role-Based Difficulties Theme, and The Challenges Encountered by Early-Career Teachers along the Emotional and Psychological Struggles of Beginning Teachers Theme.

Axial Theme	Codes
Early Teaching Challenges	Classroom Management Difficulties, Instructional Challenges
Instructional and Role-Based Difficulties	Lack of Instructional Support, Overwhelming Workload and Role Transition
Emotional and Psychological Struggles of Beginning Teachers	Emotional Exhaustion Due to Workload and Pressure, Lack of Support Leading to Isolation and Self-Doubt

Theme 1: Early Teaching Challenges

The theme Early Teaching Challenges reflects the common, complex difficulties experienced by beginning teachers as they adjust to the demands of full-time classroom teaching. From the responses in the table, two dominant codes emerged: Classroom Management Difficulties and Instructional Challenges. These categories reveal the internal and external tensions that new educators face, affecting both their instructional capacity and their psychological well-being.

Code 1: Classroom Management Difficulties

A recurring concern among early-career teachers is the challenge of maintaining student discipline while delivering lessons. Participants reported frequent behavioral disruptions, such as



inattentiveness, side conversations, and lack of student focus, which made it difficult to sustain lesson flow and keep learners engaged. These challenges often led to emotional exhaustion, frustration, and a sense of professional inadequacy.

It implies that many new teachers begin their careers without sufficient training in practical classroom management strategies, leading to reactive rather than proactive responses. This gap places additional stress on teachers who are already navigating the complexities of instruction, assessment, and learner engagement. Without established routines, clear behavioral expectations, and supportive mentorship, novice teachers often feel ill-equipped to create productive learning environments.

This issue is corroborated by Nguyen et al. (2021), who revealed that behavior management is consistently ranked as the most difficult task for new teachers, especially in schools lacking mentorship programs. Likewise, Flores and Day (2019) disclosed that early difficulties in classroom control are a major contributor to teacher attrition within the first five years of service.

The findings underscore that classroom management is not an isolated skill but a foundational element that directly influences instructional quality and emotional well-being. New teachers who lack support in this area may experience ongoing stress, reduced teaching efficacy, and diminished job satisfaction. The classroom, instead of being a place for learning and growth, becomes a space of constant disruption and stress when teachers are underprepared for behavioral challenges.

Code 2: Instructional Challenges

Another major theme that emerged was difficulty in instructional planning and delivery. Participants described being overwhelmed by the need to adapt lessons to varied learning styles, maintain student engagement, and deliver content effectively, all while handling time pressures and administrative tasks. Many reported feeling underprepared to differentiate instruction or assess student understanding in real time.

It implies that the theoretical frameworks provided during pre-service training do not always translate well into the fast-paced, adaptive environment of actual classrooms. The pressure to plan engaging, inclusive lessons often exceeds the instructional preparedness of beginning teachers, especially when paired with limited access to resources and guidance.

This finding is aligned with the research of Santoro and Kennedy (2020), who emphasized that many teacher education programs lack sufficient practical training in differentiated instruction and real-time pedagogical decision-making. Additionally, Cerna and Bautista (2022) revealed that teachers' inability to meet diverse learners' needs in the classroom is a key factor in professional dissatisfaction and instructional inconsistency.

Synthesis of instructional challenges highlights that new teachers not only struggle to plan lessons but also to execute them in ways that engage all learners effectively. Without tools for scaffolding, formative assessment, and learner-centered design, teachers may default to rigid instructional approaches that fail to connect with students. This weakens not only learning outcomes but also teacher confidence, reinforcing a cycle of inefficiency and self-doubt.



Theme 2: Instructional and Role-Based Difficulties

The theme "Instructional and Role-Based Difficulties" underscores this transitional challenge. It explores how the absence of proper mentorship, insufficient instructional resources, and overwhelming workloads adversely affect the performance, morale, and retention of novice teachers.

Code 1: Lack of Instructional Support

Beginning teachers often enter the classroom with enthusiasm and theoretical knowledge, but many find themselves struggling due to a lack of instructional support. One participant reflected on this challenge, saying, *"During my first month of teaching Grade 11 Research, I struggled with guiding students through the research process without adequate materials or guidance."* This situation reflects a broader systemic issue where novice teachers are left to navigate the complexities of instruction without mentorship or sufficient teaching resources. The lack of structured support mechanisms results in a reliance on trial-and-error strategies that can affect not only teacher confidence but also student outcomes.

This finding aligns with the work of Ingersoll and Strong (2011), who emphasize the value of mentoring programs in increasing teacher efficacy and retention. Similarly, Wang, Odell, and Schulle (2008) argue that personalized and contextualized support is essential in helping beginning teachers bridge the gap between theory and practice. These studies underscore the necessity of embedding mentorship and instructional guidance into the early years of teaching. On the contrary, some educational systems continue to operate under the assumption that pre-service education alone equips new teachers to thrive—a notion contradicted by both the experiences of practitioners and empirical evidence.

Data gathered implies that schools should prioritize the establishment of formal mentoring programs that pair new teachers with experienced educators who can offer instructional and emotional support. This mentor-mentee relationship can be instrumental in developing sound instructional practices. At the policy level, education departments need to allocate funding for induction programs and develop teaching toolkits or resource banks to support early-career teachers. Furthermore, teacher education institutions should consider forming partnerships with schools to ensure that mentorship and instructional coaching continue after graduation. Addressing the lack of instructional support is not just a matter of professional development—it is central to teacher retention, satisfaction, and effectiveness.

Code 2: Overwhelming Workload and Role Transition

This finding is consistent with the study of Fantilli and McDougall (2009), who report that new teachers frequently struggle with the expectations placed on them, particularly when they are required to perform at the same level as veteran educators. The OECD (2019) also highlights that many countries do not provide sufficient support for teachers during this critical phase, resulting in poor job satisfaction and higher attrition rates. A contrasting belief held in some school cultures is that "tough beginnings" build resilience. However, this sink-or-swim mindset often backfires, leading to emotional exhaustion and reduced instructional quality rather than long-term growth.



Implications of these findings point to the need for educational leaders to revisit how roles and responsibilities are assigned to beginning teachers. School administrators should consider reducing the non-instructional workload of novice teachers during their first year to allow them to focus on pedagogy, classroom management, and student engagement. HR departments and instructional leaders can develop phased induction plans where responsibilities are gradually introduced. Additionally, assigning new teachers to co-teach or work in collaborative teaching teams can help distribute workload and provide real-time peer support. At a policy level, class size caps for beginning teachers or workload adjustment policies may help mitigate the early career stress that often leads to attrition. Recognizing and addressing these transitional challenges is essential not only for protecting teacher well-being but also for cultivating a stable and effective teaching workforce.

Theme 3: Emotional and Psychological Struggles of Beginning Teachers

The early years of teaching are often characterized by enthusiasm and idealism, but for many novice teachers, this period also brings significant emotional and psychological strain. The theme Emotional and Psychological Struggles of Beginning Teachers captures the internal burdens educators face, such as emotional fatigue, self-doubt, and isolation, often resulting from unrelenting workloads and the absence of structured support.

Code 1: Emotional Exhaustion Due to Workload and Pressure

One of the most prominent stressors reported by participants was the immense pressure tied to teaching expectations, which frequently led to emotional and mental fatigue. As one teacher (R4) shared, *“Yes, they did. They sometimes made me question my choice of career. The pressure and workload drained me emotionally and mentally.”* Another echoed this experience, stating, *“The pressure and workload drained me emotionally and mentally”* (R9). These testimonies point to a shared experience of burnout, especially during the initial stages of teaching when classroom management, lesson planning, grading, and administrative tasks converge with little time for adjustment.

Research supports this narrative. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) argue that emotional exhaustion is a primary symptom of teacher burnout, particularly among new teachers who are expected to perform at high levels despite their limited classroom experience. Dicke et al. (2020) also found that the first few years in teaching are critical periods during which stress and fatigue can severely impact job satisfaction and retention. These studies validate the lived experiences of the participants, highlighting that emotional exhaustion is not a reflection of teacher inadequacy but a product of systemic demands.

Findings imply that school leaders and administrators must recognize that emotional exhaustion in new teachers is not merely an individual issue—it is organizational. Schools should consider implementing structured induction programs that include workload accommodations, such as fewer extracurricular duties, reduced teaching loads, or designated co-teaching periods. Furthermore, mental health resources and wellness initiatives should be embedded within school culture to promote resilience and provide early intervention when signs of burnout emerge. Failing to address these pressures not only endangers teacher retention but also compromises the quality of student learning.



Code 2: Lack of Support Leading to Isolation and Self-Doubt

Alongside the emotional strain caused by workload, many beginning teachers also suffer from a lack of mentorship and professional support, which often leads to feelings of isolation and diminished self-worth. One teacher (R7) remarked, *“At times, I felt isolated because there was little support or mentorship to help me navigate these challenges.”* Another participant (R15) shared a similar experience: *“The lack of support made me feel alone and doubted my capabilities as a teacher.”* These reflections reveal a deeper vulnerability in early-career educators—a sense of being left to “figure things out” alone in a highly demanding environment.

These experiences are consistent with the findings of Schlichte, Yssel, and Merbler (2005), who reported that the absence of collegial support is a significant factor in teacher attrition. Kelchtermans (2019) also emphasized that early professional identity is fragile and can be easily eroded by unsupportive school environments. Without feedback, encouragement, or collaborative spaces, new teachers may internalize their struggles as personal failures rather than structural issues.

The implications of this finding call for urgent attention to the relational and cultural dynamics within schools. Educational institutions must create formal mentoring systems that go beyond occasional check-ins and instead offer sustained, developmental relationships between experienced and beginning teachers. Peer support groups and professional learning communities should be established to promote collective problem-solving and emotional validation. When teachers feel seen, heard, and supported, they are more likely to remain in the profession and grow confidently into their roles. Creating a culture of care and collaboration is not an optional addition—it is a foundational requirement for a healthy school ecosystem.

An increasing body of research underscores the detrimental impact of unsupportive environments and overwhelming expectations on the mental health and retention of novice teachers, emphasizing that these challenges are both psychological and systemic. In a longitudinal study by Ingersoll and Strong (2019), it was found that beginning teachers who lacked structured induction and mentoring programs were significantly more likely to leave the profession within the first five years. Similarly, the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, 2018) revealed that new teachers consistently report higher levels of stress and lower self-efficacy, often due to isolation and inadequate institutional support. These findings reinforce the qualitative accounts of emotional exhaustion and professional doubt reported by participants, illuminating a clear pattern that links insufficient support systems to burnout and attrition. The implications extend beyond individual well-being; high turnover disrupts student learning continuity and imposes financial and cultural costs on schools. Addressing these systemic flaws through policy reforms—such as mandatory mentoring, reduced initial workloads, and investment in teacher well-being—is not just beneficial but essential for fostering long-term educational quality and stability.



Problem 2: What resilience strategies and coping mechanisms did early-career teachers employ to manage and overcome these challenges?

Table 2: Personal Coping Strategies and Adaptive Practices of Beginning Teachers, Support Systems in Early Teaching Experiences, and Professional Development and Institutional Support

Axial Theme	Codes
Personal Coping Strategies and Adaptive Practices of Beginning Teachers	Personal Resilience and Self-Care Practices, Professional Development and Collegial Support
Support Systems in Early Teaching Experiences	Social and Emotional Support from Others, Internal Motivation and Self-Affirmation
Professional Development and Institutional Support	Support Mechanisms for Early Career Teachers, Access to Practical Professional Learning

Theme 1: Personal Coping Strategies and Adaptive Practices of Beginning Teachers

The theme "Personal Coping Strategies and Adaptive Practices of Beginning Teachers" reflects the intentional efforts and adaptive mechanisms that novice educators employ to navigate the multifaceted challenges of entering the teaching profession. This theme encapsulates how beginning teachers actively shape their coping strategies through self-care and professional learning.

Code 1: Personal Resilience and Self-Care Practices

A prominent coping strategy shared by beginning teachers involves the practice of self-care and personal resilience. Teachers emphasized the importance of preserving their well-being through mindful and reflective habits. One participant remarked, "*I maintained a journal to reflect on my teaching experiences, which helped me stay positive and see areas for improvement instead of just failure.*" Another added, "*I started doing daily meditation and breathing exercises just to clear my mind and get ready for class with a better mindset.*" These accounts highlight how self-care is not a luxury but a necessity for coping with the pressures of the profession.

These findings are strongly supported by the research of Howard and Johnson (2018), who divulged that emotional resilience, built through self-care, is a foundational component for sustaining early-career teachers in the profession. Their study revealed that teachers who develop positive coping routines experience lower stress levels and higher job satisfaction. Likewise, Beltman et al. (2020) claimed that resilience is not merely an innate trait but a capacity that can be cultivated through personal habits and organizational support.

It implies that schools and education systems must go beyond academic training and recognize the importance of emotional scaffolding. Introducing wellness programs, reflective journaling practices, and quiet time spaces for teachers may empower them to handle daily



challenges more constructively. More importantly, such strategies reinforce teachers' sense of purpose and long-term commitment to the profession.

Code 2: Professional Development and Collegial Support

Equally important to personal strategies is the role of professional development and collegial support in helping new teachers thrive. Several participants credited formal training and peer mentoring as vital to their growth. One teacher disclosed, "*Trainings on student-centered teaching, inclusive education, and project-based learning gave me better tools to handle classroom challenges.*" Another emphasized, "*Peer mentoring and consistent professional support from the school administration helped me understand that I'm not alone in these struggles.*" These insights affirm that when beginning teachers are given structured learning opportunities and emotional validation through collegial support, they feel more equipped and confident in their roles.

This is corroborated by Avalos (2019), who claimed that ongoing professional development, particularly when embedded in daily teaching realities, significantly enhances teachers' confidence and instructional quality. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) highlighted that collaborative learning environments and peer networks foster not only skill development but also professional belonging among early-career educators.

It suggests that induction programs should integrate mentorship and collaborative spaces where teachers can reflect, seek guidance, and share solutions. Schools must prioritize both the technical and emotional dimensions of early teaching to create a more humane, nurturing professional environment.

Theme 2: Support Systems in Early Teaching Experiences

Beginning a teaching career is a transformative yet challenging journey. For many novice educators, the first months are marked by emotional strain, instructional difficulties, and institutional demands. The theme "Support Systems in Early Teaching Experiences" captures the dual role of relational support and personal reflection in strengthening a teacher's capacity to persist and grow professionally.

Code 1: Social and Emotional Support from Others

One of the key findings in this theme is the role of social and emotional support that beginning teachers receive from colleagues, family, school leaders, and even students' parents. Participants disclosed that small acts of empathy, informal conversations with peers, and reassurance from family members helped them overcome moments of fatigue and doubt. As one teacher shared, "*My fellow teachers, my family, and occasional check-ins from my department head were helpful. Their presence made me feel supported.*" Another affirmed that even subtle gestures like "*a smile from a parent made a big difference.*"

These statements divulge that external support networks provide more than just comfort—they serve as a buffer against burnout and emotional exhaustion. This corroborates the study of Beltman, Mansfield, and Price (2018), who emphasized that positive relationships in the school environment contribute significantly to teacher resilience. Likewise, Castro et al. (2020)



revealed that social support reduces emotional strain and increases early-career teachers' sense of belonging and professional efficacy.

It implies that schools should intentionally create spaces and opportunities for interpersonal connection among teachers, including mentorship programs and peer check-ins. Leadership teams must also engage in relational leadership, showing genuine interest in the emotional well-being of novice teachers. Institutionalizing such practices can transform informal support into an embedded part of a school's culture, strengthening both retention and performance.

Code 2: Internal Motivation and Self-Affirmation

In addition to external supports, many participants reported that their own inner drive, values, and affirmations kept them moving forward. Teachers described how reflecting on their purpose, setting personal goals, and drawing inspiration from role models helped them maintain focus. One participant noted, "When I felt overwhelmed, I reminded myself why I became a teacher. That internal motivation helped me push through." Another added, "Even when I felt unsupported, I held on to my goal of making a difference in my students' lives." These personal reflections underscore the importance of intrinsic motivation as a key factor in teacher resilience, especially during the challenging early years of teaching.

These insights suggest that self-regulation and purpose-driven reflection are critical adaptive tools for beginning teachers. This finding aligns with Tait's (2018) work, which identified "intrinsic purpose" as a major predictor of perseverance among new educators. Similarly, Day and Qing (2021) claimed that values-driven motivation and professional identity formation protect early-career teachers from disengagement and burnout. By staying connected to their core values, teachers are more likely to push through moments of doubt or overwhelm, helping them navigate the emotional toll of the profession.

Further research corroborates the role of self-reflection and professional identity in fostering resilience. Richards and Thomas (2019) found that teachers who engaged in regular self-reflection and maintained a strong sense of purpose were more resilient, better able to cope with challenges, and less prone to burnout. Kim (2016) also highlighted the importance of a well-defined professional identity, which serves as a guiding force in overcoming the stressors of teaching. These studies suggest that while external support systems are essential, internal resources like self-reflection and a clear sense of purpose are equally vital for long-term perseverance in the profession.

Implications of these findings point to the need for professional development programs that go beyond skill acquisition and focus on identity-building and reflective practice. Encouraging teachers to articulate their teaching philosophies, celebrate small wins, and connect with inspiring narratives can deepen their emotional commitment to the profession. Schools should integrate goal-setting workshops, mentorship programs that foster self-reflection, and opportunities for teachers to share and develop their personal and professional values. This approach would help strengthen teachers' emotional resilience, making them better equipped to face the challenges of their work while also enriching the learning environment for their students.



Theme 3: Professional Development and Institutional Support

In the evolving landscape of education, the need for robust professional development and institutional support has never been more pronounced. This theme captures the essential role of continuous learning opportunities and administrative guidance in helping new teachers navigate the complexities of classroom instruction.

Code 1: Institutional and Administrative Support

Institutional and administrative support plays a foundational role in ensuring that new teachers transition effectively into the profession. As reflected in the statements of participants, there is a strong desire for school leaders to provide consistent check-ins and guidance. One teacher noted, *“If administrators could regularly check in and provide guidance, it would lessen our confusion”* (R9), highlighting the need for sustained leadership presence, especially in the early phases of teaching.

The concept of mentorship and peer collaboration also surfaced strongly. For example, one respondent emphasized, *“Peer mentoring and consistent professional support from the school administration would help new teachers a lot”* (R1-15), suggesting that both horizontal (peer-based) and vertical (admin-led) support systems are essential. These findings are corroborated by Ingersoll & Strong (2011), who concluded that induction programs that include mentoring significantly improve teacher retention and instructional effectiveness.

However, a contrasting view is presented in the study by Rockoff (2008), which found that the mere presence of mentorship does not guarantee improved performance unless mentors are well-trained and the structure is systematically implemented. This implies that while support is desired, its quality and strategic execution matter significantly.

The implications of these findings suggest that school leaders must institutionalize a culture of guidance, not just through formal evaluation but through regular coaching, feedback loops, and open-door policies. When administrators are accessible and responsive, it reinforces a safe environment for professional experimentation and growth.

Code 2: Access to Relevant Professional Development

Participants also emphasized the value of engaging in targeted and relevant professional development (PD). One teacher shared, *“Trainings on student-centered teaching, inclusive education, and project-based learning gave me better tools to handle classroom challenges”* (R1-15). This sentiment was echoed by others who benefitted from seminars on classroom management and differentiated instruction, such as R5 and R11. These reflections highlight the importance of PD that is directly aligned with the specific needs of teachers in the classroom, underscoring the connection between professional learning and practical application in the teaching environment.

Research supports this focus on practical, context-driven PD. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) argue that high-quality professional development is not only content-focused but must also be collaborative and sustained over time. Teachers in this study valued training that offered practical, immediately applicable strategies, a key indicator of effective PD. Similarly, recent studies by Ronfeldt et al. (2019) emphasize the need for PD programs to be tailored to address specific teaching contexts and challenges, ensuring that teachers can immediately implement what they have learned in their daily routines. This finding reinforces the importance of PD initiatives that are responsive to the evolving needs of teachers in the field.

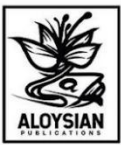


Furthermore, a 2022 study by Hagger et al. explored how PD programs that emphasize peer collaboration and reflective practice help teachers build deeper expertise and more resilient teaching strategies. Teachers who engage in collaborative PD, according to this study, are better equipped to handle classroom challenges and navigate educational reforms. These findings align with the experiences shared by the participants in this study, who described how PD activities focusing on inclusive education and differentiated instruction helped them manage diverse classrooms more effectively.

However, recent critiques highlight that not all PD programs are equally effective. Kennedy (2021) critiques many PD initiatives for focusing too much on content delivery and not enough on supporting teachers to transfer their learning into practice. This concern is echoed in the findings of a 2023 meta-analysis by Avalos and Youngs, which shows that PD programs that lack follow-up support or ongoing opportunities for teachers to implement and refine new strategies often fall short in producing lasting changes in teaching practices. This critique emphasizes the importance of integrating PD with a broader institutional support system to ensure that knowledge gained through training is meaningfully transferred to classroom settings.

The implication of these findings is that professional development should be personalized, context-based, and embedded within a supportive institutional framework. Recent studies by Garet et al. (2021) suggest that PD should be designed to meet the unique needs of teachers while aligning with broader school goals. When PD is sustained and directly relevant to teachers' daily challenges, engagement increases, leading to more meaningful professional growth and improved outcomes for students. For this to occur, schools must establish structures that support continuous learning, such as follow-up sessions, peer collaboration, and ongoing feedback loops. When PD initiatives are truly aligned with teachers' realities, they enhance both teacher well-being and student achievement.

Additionally, recent studies highlight the growing role of technology in professional development. Yoon et al. (2024) found that digital PD platforms, offering personalized content and interactive features, improve teacher engagement and effectiveness. These platforms allow for flexible learning and foster collaboration, making PD more accessible, especially in resource-limited schools. However, the study cautions that digital PD should complement, not replace, traditional in-person training to ensure its full impact. Integrating technology in PD can enhance teachers' professional growth when used as part of a broader, supportive framework.



Problem 3: What activities or interventions can be recommended for the development of a comprehensive resilience-building program for early-career teachers based on teachers' lived experiences?

Table 3: Structured Professional Development, Skill Development for Emotional and Instructional Resilience, and Guidance and Mindset for Early-Career Teacher

Axial Theme	Codes
Structured Professional Development	Mentoring Programs, Access to Practical Professional Learning
Skill Development for Emotional and Instructional Resilience	Emotional Support and Resilience Building, Instructional Focus Through Task Reduction
Guidance and Mindset for Early-Career Teachers	Openness to Learning and Support, Purpose-Driven Perseverance

Theme 1: Structured Professional Development

The transition into the teaching profession can be both exhilarating and overwhelming for new educators. This theme underscores the critical role of institutional support systems—particularly structured mentoring and resilience-building initiatives—in fostering teacher well-being and professional growth. By equipping teachers with emotional, psychological, and practical tools, schools can significantly enhance teacher retention, job satisfaction, and instructional effectiveness.

Code 1: Mentoring Programs

Mentoring programs are a foundational support system for novice teachers. One participant shared, “Mentoring made me realize I wasn't alone. We need more structured support like that, especially during the first few months” (R6). This highlights the emotional and professional reassurance that mentoring provides during the critical early phase of teaching.

Recent studies affirm the effectiveness of mentoring. Williams et al. (2022) emphasized that robust mentoring programs significantly enhance job satisfaction and retention among new teachers. Moultrou (2025) further noted that mentoring not only supports new educators but also empowers veteran teachers, creating a culture of collaboration and shared leadership. These programs are especially impactful in high-need schools, where teacher turnover is most prevalent.

Schools must prioritize the development of structured, evidence-based mentoring programs. These should include mentor training, clear objectives, and regular feedback mechanisms. Effective mentoring not only supports teacher well-being but also improves instructional quality and student outcomes. Moreover, it fosters a collaborative school culture that reduces isolation and promotes professional growth.

Code 2: Resilience-Building Workshops

Resilience-building workshops were also identified as crucial for managing the emotional and psychological demands of teaching. One participant noted, “Workshops focused on mental well-being helped me understand how to balance my time and emotions in and outside the



classroom” (R8), while another added, “Sometimes, I feel overwhelmed. A regular resilience session or a mentor I can talk to would really help me manage both stress and workload” (R4).

Recent research supports these insights. Al-Jarf (2023) proposed a comprehensive model for enhancing teacher resilience through strategies such as mindfulness, time management, and peer collaboration. These strategies were shown to reduce stress and improve job satisfaction. Additionally, resilience training has been linked to improved teaching effectiveness and emotional regulation, especially in high-pressure environments.

Institutions should embed resilience-building into their professional development frameworks. These workshops must be ongoing, context-specific, and supported by systemic changes such as manageable workloads and administrative support. A dual approach—personal resilience and institutional reform—can create a more sustainable teaching environment and reduce burnout and attrition.

Theme 2: Skill Development for Emotional and Instructional Resilience

This theme emphasizes the dual necessity of emotional well-being and instructional efficiency for teachers to succeed in their roles. Participants highlighted how emotional support systems and the reduction of non-teaching tasks can significantly enhance their resilience and instructional focus. These two dimensions are essential for sustaining teacher motivation, reducing burnout, and improving classroom outcomes.

Code 1: Emotional Support and Resilience Building

Participants expressed a strong need for consistent emotional and psychological support. One respondent noted, “*Mental health workshops help me bounce back from tough weeks*” (R3-9), while another emphasized, “*There should be consistent emotional and psychological support systems available for teachers*” (R2-8). These statements reflect the emotional toll of teaching and the importance of institutional support in maintaining mental well-being.

Recent research supports these concerns. Soutter (2023) emphasized that transformative social-emotional learning (SEL) for teachers, focusing on holistic well-being and equity, can significantly improve teacher preparedness and longevity. Similarly, a 2023 ERIC study highlighted that emotional support must be systemic, not just individual, to be effective.

Schools must institutionalize emotional support through regular mental health workshops, peer support groups, and access to counseling services. These initiatives should be embedded in school culture and supported by leadership. Emotional resilience is not just a personal trait but a professional necessity that directly impacts teacher retention and student outcomes.

Code 2: Instructional Focus Through Task Reduction

Teachers also voiced frustration over administrative burdens that detract from instructional time. One participant remarked, “*Sometimes we spend more time on paperwork than actual teaching. It’s exhausting*” (R4-6), while another added, “*Reducing clerical work would ease our daily load a lot*” (R6-10). These comments underscore how non-teaching tasks can erode instructional quality and teacher morale.

This concern is echoed in recent studies. Pacaol (2023) found that workload intensification—especially through non-teaching duties—negatively affects teaching quality and increases stress. Similarly, a 2023 study on teacher retention emphasized that reducing administrative burdens and increasing autonomy are key to keeping teachers in the profession.



Educational institutions should streamline or delegate administrative tasks to support staff, allowing teachers to focus on instruction. Policy reforms should prioritize reducing clerical work and unnecessary meetings. By doing so, schools can enhance instructional quality, reduce burnout, and improve overall teacher satisfaction.

Theme 3: Guidance and Mindset for Early-Career Teachers

The theme of Guidance and Mindset for Early-Career Teachers emphasizes the internal and external resources that help novice educators navigate the complexities of the profession. Participants highlighted the importance of cultivating a growth mindset, seeking support, and staying connected to their purpose. These elements are foundational for building resilience and sustaining motivation in the early years of teaching.

Code 1: Openness to Learning and Support

Participants underscored the value of being open to learning and seeking help. One respondent advised, *“Ask for help when you need it. No one expects you to know everything on day one”* (R2-7), while another emphasized, *“Learn from mentors and be patient with your growth”* (R3-10). These statements reflect a mindset that embraces vulnerability, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

This aligns with findings from a 2021 study by Halle et al., which promoted a culture of continuous learning in early education settings through collaborative learning models. Similarly, a 2019 ERIC report emphasized that early-career supports and ongoing professional development are critical for teacher retention and effectiveness.

Schools should foster environments where early-career teachers feel safe to ask questions, make mistakes, and grow. Structured mentorship, peer collaboration, and reflective practice should be embedded in professional development programs. Encouraging openness to learning not only supports individual growth but also contributes to a more adaptive and innovative school culture.

Code 2: Purpose-Driven Perseverance

Another key insight from participants was the importance of staying connected to one’s purpose. As one teacher shared, *“Your passion is your fuel. Keep that fire alive, even when things get tough”* (R5-11). Others echoed the sentiment that remembering their “why” helps them persevere through challenges.

This is supported by recent research. A 2022 study by Türk and Korkmaz found that teachers with high levels of professional dedication and commitment also demonstrated stronger attitudes toward their profession and greater resilience. Similarly, a 2025 study on job satisfaction and professional commitment emphasized that a strong sense of purpose is a predictor of long-term engagement and well-being.

Educational leaders should help teachers reconnect with their core motivations through reflective practices, storytelling, and recognition of their impact. Purpose-driven perseverance can be nurtured through supportive leadership, meaningful professional development, and opportunities for teachers to see the results of their work. This not only enhances teacher retention but also improves student outcomes by fostering more passionate and committed educators.



Proposed Comprehensive Resilience-Building Program for Early-Career Teachers

The Resilience Program for Early-Career Teachers is a support initiative designed to empower novice educators in navigating the challenges of the teaching profession. It focuses on building emotional strength, stress management skills, and adaptive coping strategies through mentoring, peer collaboration, and reflective practices. By fostering a positive mindset and encouraging professional growth, the program helps early-career teachers develop confidence, maintain well-being, and sustain their passion for teaching, ultimately contributing to their long-term success and retention in the education field. The comprehensive details of the program are presented in Table 10 in the succeeding pages. Designed with evidence-based practices, the program also includes regular check-ins and progress monitoring to ensure sustained support. It emphasizes the importance of community, creating safe spaces for teachers to share experiences and seek guidance. Ultimately, the program aims to nurture a resilient and inspired teaching workforce equipped to thrive in dynamic educational environments.

IV. DISCUSSION

This section presents the key insights derived from the lived experiences of early-career teachers, highlighting the core challenges they face and the strategies they employ to adapt and grow.

1. Early-career teachers in Abra face multifaceted challenges that hinder their instructional effectiveness and emotional well-being. These include classroom management difficulties, lack of instructional support, overwhelming workloads, and emotional exhaustion. Many teachers reported feelings of isolation and self-doubt, often stemming from the absence of structured mentorship and institutional guidance;
2. Despite challenges, early-career teachers actively develop coping mechanisms and resilience strategies. These include personal self-care routines, reflective journaling, participation in professional development, and seeking collegial support. Teachers also rely on internal motivation and a strong sense of purpose to sustain their commitment to the profession;
3. There is a strong demand for structured institutional support systems, such as mentoring programs, resilience-building workshops, and administrative guidance. Teachers emphasized that these supports are not only beneficial but essential for navigating the early years of teaching, improving instructional quality, and reducing burnout.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, this section draws evidence-based inferences about the systemic and personal factors influencing the resilience, performance, and retention of novice teachers.

1. The early years of teaching are marked by a convergence of instructional, emotional, and institutional challenges that, if left unaddressed, can lead to professional dissatisfaction and attrition. The lack of practical training in classroom management and differentiated instruction, combined with administrative overload, significantly impairs teacher performance and morale;
2. Resilience among early-career teachers is both a personal and systemic construct. While individual strategies such as self-care and reflective practice are vital, they are insufficient without the presence of supportive professional environments. Teachers thrive when they are part of a culture that values collaboration, mentorship, and continuous learning;
3. Institutional interventions must be intentional, sustained, and embedded within



school culture. Mentoring, emotional support systems, and relevant professional development are not optional add-ons but foundational elements of a successful induction process. Without these, schools' risk high turnover, reduced instructional quality, and long-term instability in the teaching workforce.

Recommendations

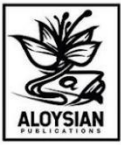
This section outlines actionable strategies and policy suggestions aimed at improving the support systems, professional development, and well-being of early-career teachers.

1. Establish comprehensive induction programs that include structured mentoring, classroom management training, and phased workload assignments. These programs should be designed collaboratively with experienced educators and tailored to the specific needs of early-career teachers;
2. Integrate wellness and resilience-building initiatives into school systems. This includes regular mental health workshops, peer support groups, and reflective practices such as journaling and coaching. Schools should also create safe spaces for emotional expression and professional dialogue;
3. Institutionalize ongoing, context-specific professional development and administrative support for early-career teachers. School leaders must provide consistent feedback, access to teaching resources, and opportunities for collaborative learning. Policies should also be reviewed to reduce non-instructional burdens and ensure that early-career teachers can focus on pedagogy and student engagement.

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