



## Seeing the Unseen: Exploring the Safety Measures and Practices of Mountain Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of teachers in mountainous areas, focusing on their safety measures and practices, and the challenges they encounter in fulfilling their professional responsibilities. Ten teachers from the Schools Division of Escalante City and Sagay City were selected through convenience sampling. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed several themes, including: (1) Challenges in Mountain Schools due to Exposure to Different Risks and Hazards, such as dangerous travel routes, hazardous terrain conditions, and limited transportation access; (2) Adaptive Safety Practices and Strategies of Mountain Teachers, including community support and self-developed safety measures; and (3) Support, Motivation, and Professional Resilience, highlighting the teachers' reliance on resilience, perseverance, and collaboration to manage risks and deliver quality education. The results emphasize the need for enhanced institutional and government support, including formal safety training, emergency preparedness programs, and infrastructure improvements, to improve mountain teachers' capacity to manage risks. Despite the challenges, teachers continue to demonstrate a commitment and passion for teaching, transforming communities and fostering effective learning in students.

**Keywords:** mountain teacher, mountainous area, geographically isolated area, safety measures

### How to Cite:

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## INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a vital role in shaping society's future, and their contributions to education are invaluable. However, teachers assigned to mountainous areas face numerous challenges that affect their safety and well-being. This qualitative phenomenological research study aims to explore the safety measures and practices of teachers assigned to mountainous areas, specifically in the Schools Divisions of Escalante City and Sagay City. These areas are characterized by difficult terrain, limited transportation access, and environmental risks, often classified as Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA).

Previous studies have highlighted the challenges faced by teachers in remote and rural areas. For example, Equipado and Guilbas (2021) found that teachers in rural areas face risks such as poisonous snakes, car accidents, and treacherous roads, especially during rainy days. Similarly, Salendab and Akmad (2023) noted that many rural schools are not prepared to provide teachers with security and protection, and that there is a lack of practice and training in this regard.

Despite these studies, there is a lack of research on the safety measures and practices of teachers in mountainous areas, particularly in the Philippines. Most studies have focused on the challenges faced by teachers in urban and suburban areas, leaving a gap in the literature on teachers' experiences in remote and rural areas.

Galut (2024) emphasized the unique challenges faced by teachers assigned to remote areas, including navigating treacherous trails, crossing rivers, and walking for kilometers to reach the school. However, more research is needed on the safety measures and practices of these teachers, as well as on the support systems and policies that can be put in place to ensure their safety and well-being.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring the lived experiences of teachers in mountainous areas, including their safety measures and practices, and identifying the problems they encounter.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of selected teachers assigned to primary schools in mountainous areas of the Schools Division of Escalante City and the Schools Division of Sagay City. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What problems and challenges do they encounter?
2. What safety measures and practices do they employ?
3. How do teachers prepare to respond to different challenges?
4. What motivates them to continue teaching in these areas?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents a compilation of relevant studies and literature that will provide further ideas and the foundation for the present study.

A study on teachers' lived experiences in remote areas was established in 2025 and examines the experiences of teachers assigned to teach in such areas. It is anchored in a qualitative hermeneutic-phenomenological research study investigating teachers' journeys through the trials of teaching in remote areas. Findings revealed that surviving in the trails of the lived experiences of teachers in a remote areas had diverse experiences: Accessibility at the end of the trail, teachers' love and passion, experience is the best teacher, eagerness behind challenges, culture-based teaching, teaching is fulfilling a life-changing experience, quality education is possible through support and connection, twenty-first-century teachers and twenty-first-century IP learners in remote area (M. Galut, et al, 2025).

(A.Baynosa et al, 2024) Teachers in last-mile schools faced many challenges and made daily sacrifices, including for transportation, instructional materials, and basic needs. Teachers are the cornerstone of education, playing a vital role in shaping the future. Often hailed as the noblest profession, teaching embodies challenges and immense rewards. As Aristotle wisely noted, "The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet," encapsulating the essence of educators' journey, navigating hardships to witness the profound impact of their dedication (Klassen et al, 2010).

Looking into teachers' safety in far-flung areas may address crucial gaps. It can provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of the complexities of teaching in remote areas, which is essential for developing targeted policies and support systems for teachers in these contexts. Second, it highlights the resilience, creativity, and dedication of teachers working under challenging conditions, offering valuable lessons for teacher education and professional development programs (E. Calizo et, al 2024)



Teachers in far-flung areas face significant challenges, including limited resources, difficult travel routes, and struggles with time management. Despite these hurdles, they exhibit strong adaptability and resourcefulness, often relying on community engagement and personal resilience to navigate their demanding work environments (E. Salazar et al, 2025).

A major problem in the Philippine education system is the lack of teachers, especially in rural and underprivileged areas. To solve this problem, most teachers are sent to these areas, which are frequently far from their homes and familiar support networks. These teachers face a variety of challenges, including isolation, limited resources, cultural diversity, and geographic barriers. It is important to understand their challenges and resilience (E. Fabregas et al, 2025) .

Understanding the challenges and resilience of remote school teachers in rural schools has significant implications for educational practice and policy in the Philippines (J. Paglinawan et al., 2025). By acknowledging and addressing the challenges these educators face, policymakers and educational stakeholders can develop targeted interventions to support their professional development, well-being, and retention. Additionally, fostering collaborative partnerships between schools, communities, and government agencies can facilitate the provision of resources, training, and support networks for outstation teachers (Santos, A., & Reyes, B., 2020)

Another study on the Challenges and Resilience of Teachers in remote schools was conducted in May 2025 and explores the challenges and resilience of teachers assigned to remote schools in Bukidnon, Philippines. It highlights the unique challenges educators face in geographically isolated areas, including limited resources, cultural diversity, and professional isolation. According to E. Fabrigas et al. (2025), the challenges and resilience shown by remote location teachers in rural areas in overcoming obstacles have received little consideration in previous studies. There are not many thorough studies that focus on the situation of remote schoolteachers in Bukidnon. By emphasizing the challenges and resilience of these teachers in this context, this study seeks to close this gap in the literature.

According to Barcena (2018), it is very challenging for teachers to be assigned to rural areas because they have to endure a range of uncomfortable means of transportation, such as "large jeepneys," "habal-habals," and even riding horses and walking for extended distances to reach their station. Remote schools frequently lack essential resources (Figuroa et al., 2016) and employ instructors who may experience a range of stressors that could impair their effectiveness (Hartney, 2016).

Moreover, those teachers also sacrifice their spare time for their families, as they go home every day after a tiring day of teaching. Many of them choose to stay at the place where they are teaching because the communities are just too far away from their homes. Their original home, where their family lives, is becoming their vacation house because they go home on weekends and sometimes just a few times a month, depending on the number of school duties that need to be done (Limin et al., 2018). This study is about NAVIGATING EDUCATIONAL FRONTIERS: UNWEAVING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN FAR-FLUNG SCHOOLS ON NEGROS ISLAND, published in May 2024.

The study suggested that teachers in remote schools encounter various challenges—physical, emotional, mental, and social—such as navigating rough transportation, coping with isolated communities, and managing diverse learners. Despite these hurdles, teachers demonstrate resilience by adapting creatively and resourcefully to meet the needs of students and communities with limited resources. The research highlights teachers' deep commitment to their profession, showing that teaching in remote areas is not just about imparting academic knowledge but also about making a transformative impact on individuals and communities (M. Ucag, 2024)

Another body of literature indicates that policy analysis is necessary to establish approaches to equip rural educators with the skills to tackle teacher shortages in remote areas (Mitchell et al., 2022). Teaching in public schools is challenging yet fulfilling; teachers believe they contribute to learners' development and national progress (de Vera et al., 2021). New teachers in rural areas face increased work demands, including teaching split-grade or multiple-age classes, due to the unique challenges of their teaching context (Hellsten et al., 2011). Strategies like induction programs prove crucial for novice teachers, reducing attrition by imparting practical knowledge, essential employability skills, and soft skills (Kadel et al., 2023), including knowledge of the nature of their workplace and the sociopolitical situation of the area where they are assigned to teach. Thus, boosting agency, efficacy, and resilience (AER) levels safeguards novice teachers from daily pressures and intense work environments, potentially reducing early-career attrition (Keogh et al., 2012).

Teacher safety in far-flung areas is critical because they operate in high-risk environments prone to conflict, natural disasters, and logistical challenges, which directly impact their ability to provide education. Ensuring their safety—and security—is essential for teacher retention, educational continuity, and promoting student wellbeing and academic performance (M. Bauyot et al., 2024). This is from the lived experiences of Teachers in far-flung areas of Davao Del Norte.

This phenomenological study examines the lived experiences of teachers in remote parts of the Philippines' Davao Del Norte Division. This study used a phenomenological qualitative method to describe teachers' experiences in remote areas, enabling them to reflect on their lived experiences, obstacles, and coping mechanisms. In this study, three key themes emerge from



teacher interviews conducted in Talaingod, Langilan, and Kapalong West districts: teachers' unique experiences in distant areas, their coping strategies, and the perceptive observations they provide about their positions (ResearchGate, 2024)

Findings suggested that teachers face various challenges, including limited resources, armed groups, and social isolation, in addition to language barriers and logistical challenges. Teachers show resiliency in the face of these difficulties by drawing on the community's and their coworkers' support, modifying their pedagogical approaches, and harnessing repurposed resources and community initiatives to upgrade school infrastructure (E. Calizo et al., 2024).

The compiled related studies and articles provided background and lived experiences of teachers assigned in far-flung areas; they showed the different challenges or difficulties teachers would have to deal with daily in their profession. The review also provided guidelines for the relevant methodology and foundation required by the present study.

## THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), which proposes that a hierarchy of needs drives individuals. The hierarchy consists of five levels: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. In the context of mountain teachers, the safety needs level is particularly relevant. Teachers face numerous environmental risks, including landslides, flooding, and uneven terrain, as well as man-made disasters such as armed conflict. Meeting these safety needs can enable teachers to focus on higher-level goals, such as improving instructional quality and achieving professional growth.

By addressing teachers' safety needs, policymakers and educators can promote their overall well-being and job satisfaction. This can lead to increased motivation, reduced stress, and improved teaching effectiveness, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study on the safety measures and practices of teachers assigned to mountainous areas is based on the IPOO (Input-Process-Output-Outcomes) model. The input component includes external factors such as geographical location, climate, and environmental risks, as well as school and teacher characteristics, and government policies. These inputs influence the process component, which involves safety measures and practices, teaching and learning, and risk management. The output component consists of teacher safety and well-being, student learning outcomes, and school performance. Finally, the outcomes component encompasses improved teacher retention, enhanced community engagement, and better educational outcomes. The IPOO model shows how the inputs influence the process, which leads to outputs and ultimately outcomes, providing a framework for understanding the complex relationships between these factors and identifying areas for improvement. The IPOO model shows how the inputs (external environment, school characteristics, teacher characteristics, and government policies) influence the process (safety measures and practices, teaching and learning, and risk management), which leads to outputs (teacher safety and well-being, student learning outcomes, and school performance) and ultimately outcomes (improved teacher retention, enhanced community engagement, and better educational outcomes).

Input	Process	Output	Outcome
Geographical location, climate, and environmental risks (e.g., landslides, flooding)	Safety Measures and Practices: Actions taken by teachers and schools to ensure safety, such as emergency preparedness plans, safety kits, and communication systems	Teacher Safety and Well-being	Improved Teacher Retention
School Characteristics: School infrastructure, resources, and support systems	Teaching and Learning: Teaching strategies, classroom management, and student engagement	Improved academic performance, attendance, and engagement	Enhanced Community Engagement
Teacher Characteristics: Demographics, experience, and training	Risk Management: Identification, assessment, and mitigation of risks	Improved school reputation, retention of teachers, and community satisfaction	Better Educational Outcomes
Government Policies: Department of Education			



policies and programs for teacher safety and well-being	associated with teaching in mountainous areas		
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## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing the phenomenological research method. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach that focuses on exploring the subjective experiences and perceptions of individuals. This approach is particularly suited to this study, as it emphasizes understanding the subjective experiences and perceptions of mountain teachers, offering a rich, detailed account of their experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms.

### Participants of the Study

This study involved 10 selected public elementary school teachers from the Schools Division of Escalante City and the Schools Division of Sagay City. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, a nonprobability sampling technique that selects individuals or units based on specific characteristics, knowledge, and experience relevant to the study's purpose. The participants met specific criteria: they are permanent teachers in the specified divisions, have at least 1 year of experience working in mountainous areas, and are licensed professional teachers.

The participating schools are located in far-flung barangays in both cities, with similar travel experiences indicating rough or non-cemented roads, long travel times (1-2 hours), motorcycle or habal-habal transportation, and crossing rivers or steep roads.

### Research Instrument

This study used a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions to collect rich, detailed data on teachers' experiences in mountainous areas. The interview guide was carefully designed to explore three primary areas: the teachers' experiences, including their daily lives, challenges, and coping mechanisms; the safety measures and practices they employed to ensure their safety and well-being; and the factors that motivate them to continue working in these areas.

The development of the interview guide involved a thorough literature review and validation by subject experts. The guide underwent content validity assessment using the Lawshe Content Validity Ratio (CVR) tool, with a threshold of .76 or above for validity.

To ensure the reliability of the research instrument, the study employed several strategies:

1. **Trustworthiness:** The study established trustworthiness through credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.
2. **Credibility:** The researcher ensured credibility by conducting in-depth interviews, using open-ended questions, and probing for more information.
3. **Dependability:** The researcher ensured dependability by conducting repeated interviews with participants and using a semi-structured interview guide.
4. **Confirmability:** The researcher ensured confirmability by presenting the notes and transcripts to the participants for validation and confirmation.
5. **Data Saturation:** The study used data saturation as a benchmark for reliability, where participants' responses were deemed reliable once no new information emerged from additional interviews.

The interview guide underwent content validity assessment using the Lawshe Content Validity Ratio (CVR) tool, with a threshold of 0.76 or higher. Nine experts evaluated each question, rating them as essential, essential but not necessary, or not essential. Only questions meeting the threshold were considered valid.

To test the reliability of the interview guide, the researcher conducted a pilot study with 2-3 participants, which helped refine the questions and ensure they were clear and effective at capturing the necessary data.

By employing these strategies, the study aimed to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of the data collected.



## *Data Gathering Procedure*

The data-gathering process began by securing approvals from relevant authorities, including the Schools Division Superintendent and the School Principals of the participating schools. Informed consent forms were distributed to school heads and participants, outlining the study's title, purpose, and ethical considerations.

Upon approval, the researcher scheduled in-depth interviews with the selected participants. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the respondent's consent using an audio recorder, enabling open-ended conversations and in-depth exploration of their experiences. After each interview, the researcher's notes were presented to each participant for validation and confirmation of the responses.

## *Data Analysis*

This study employed a thematic analysis approach, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), to uncover themes related to teachers' lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms in mountainous areas. The analysis involved several steps:

1. **Transcription:** The interview data were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness.
2. **Familiarization:** The researchers immersed themselves in the data, reading and re-reading the transcripts to gain a sense of the whole.
3. **Coding:** Initial codes were generated systematically across the entire dataset, identifying units of meaning relevant to the research questions.
4. **Theme Development:** The codes were organized into broader themes, which were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflected the data.
5. **Reporting:** The findings were written up in a report that connects the analysis to the research questions and existing literature.

## *Ethical Considerations*

This study prioritized the rights and welfare of the participants, ensuring that their involvement was voluntary, informed, and respectful. The following ethical considerations were observed:

1. **Informed Consent:** Participants were provided with informed consent forms, outlining the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study. They were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time.
2. **Confidentiality:** Participants' identities and responses were kept confidential, with data anonymized and stored securely.
3. **Anonymity:** Participants were assured that their responses would be anonymous and that their identities would not be disclosed.
4. **Risk and Benefit:** The study minimized risks to participants, ensuring that they were not exposed to harm or discomfort. The study's benefits, including improvements in teacher safety and well-being, were clearly communicated.
5. **Respect for Persons:** Participants were treated with respect and dignity, with their autonomy and decisions respected throughout the study.

The researcher also obtained approval from the relevant authorities, including the Schools Division Superintendent and the School Principals of the participating schools, before data collection.

By prioritizing these ethical considerations, the study ensured that participants were protected and respected, and that the research was conducted with integrity and transparency.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study explored the challenges mountain teachers face in their daily lives. The results revealed three key themes: (1) Challenges in Mountain Schools due to the Exposure to Different Risks and Hazards, (2) Adaptive Safety Practices and Strategies of Mountain Teachers, and (3) Support, Motivation, and Professional Resilience.

### **1. Challenges in Mountain Schools due to the Exposure to Different Risks and Hazards**

#### **1.1. Dangerous travel routes and hazardous terrain conditions**



Mountain teachers face a range of challenges in their daily lives, from hazardous terrain conditions to limited access to resources. One of the most significant challenges is the difficulty of travelling to school. As one respondent noted, "Most of the roads going to school are not yet cemented, so travelling to my assigned station is very difficult and risky." (R2) This is not just a matter of inconvenience, but a serious safety concern. The lack of proper road infrastructure poses a significant risk to the safety and well-being of mountain teachers and can make it difficult for them to access their schools.

## 1.2. Natural Disaster Risk

In addition to the challenges posed by terrain conditions, mountain teachers also face significant risks from natural disasters. As one respondent noted, "In my assigned school, the most significant safety hazards come from the environment itself because, as of now, we cannot predict the weather." (R4) This unpredictability can make it difficult for teachers to prepare for and respond to natural disasters, and can put them and their students at risk.

## 1.3. Personal Safety Concerns

Mountain teachers also face significant personal safety concerns, including conflicts and security threats. As one respondent noted, "It was frightening. Of course, since you have students, what you really feel is nervousness because of the conflict happening around." (R5) This can make it difficult for teachers to feel safe and secure in their schools, and can affect their ability to teach and support their students. Many respondents noted they had to travel long distances to reach their schools, often using unreliable or hazardous transportation. As one respondent described, "As a mountain teacher, my experience is that my house is far from the city. I can only travel by motorcycle, and after that I still need to walk for almost one hour or even more..." (R6) This can be exhausting and time-consuming, and can take away from the time and energy that teachers have to devote to their work. Another respondent described, "I travel almost two hours, depending on the conditions, from Calatrava to the crossing." (R2) This can be exhausting and time-consuming, and can take away from the time and energy that teachers have to devote to their work.

## 1.4. Exposure to Community-Based Security Threats

Mountain teachers face a unique set of challenges, including exposure to community-based security threats. One respondent recalled a particularly harrowing experience: "Way back in 2024, we experienced an armed conflict between the military and the new people's army... The fear was indescribable." (R1) This respondent's experience highlights the very real and personal impact of community-based security threats on mountain teachers.

The fear and uncertainty generated by such conflicts can be overwhelming, making it difficult for teachers to focus on their work and provide quality education to their students. Moreover, the lack of support and resources to address these security threats can exacerbate the challenges faced by mountain teachers.

The respondents' experiences with community-based security threats underscore the need for support and resources to ensure their safety and well-being. This is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the importance of community engagement and conflict resolution in promoting peace and stability (Reference).

To mitigate the impact of community-based security threats, the government and school administrators should provide support and resources to mountain teachers. This could include training on conflict resolution and management, as well as access to counseling and other forms of support. By prioritizing the safety and well-being of mountain teachers, we can help ensure that they can provide quality education to their students, even in the face of adversity.

## 1.5. Low Internet Connectivity

Finally, mountain teachers also face challenges related to internet connectivity. Many respondents noted that they had difficulty accessing reliable internet connections, which hindered their communication with colleagues and access to resources. As one respondent noted, "So before we faced challenges like limited electricity, but now it is consistent, and for the internet signal, it is so weak, kinanlan gid namon nga isang-at sa amon mga cellphone sa babaw bintana sa eskwelahan para makasagap lang gid kami signal." (R8) This can make it difficult for teachers to stay connected and access the resources they need to support their teaching.

## 2. Adaptive Safety Practices and Strategies of Mountain Teachers

### 2.1. Personal Coping Mechanisms



Mountain teachers have developed various personal coping mechanisms to manage the challenges they face in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas. As one respondent noted, "I was expecting post celebrations sa New Year's. So pag kita nako sa mga, parents na naggdagan-dagan para kuhaon ilang mga bata kay lagi gyera na ditto, tapos hadlok ko sa akoang safety and at the same time sa akong mga bata pero gikalma lang jud nakun akong self kay dili ka masalbar sa imong paing hestirical kay nahadlok ka sa imong situation." (R1) This respondent highlights the importance of maintaining a positive mindset and composure in the face of challenging situations. By doing so, mountain teachers can better manage the stress and anxiety associated with their work. Mountain teachers also take the initiative to develop self-made safety measures to mitigate risks associated with travel and environmental hazards. As one respondent described, "Traveling to school, or going to school kay on Sunday afternoon, I see to it that I am physically well, okay akong pmatyag kay para kung naay mga situation nga kinahanglan naku ug immidiate response kay maka-react dayun ko..." (R1) This proactive approach to safety is crucial in areas where resources may be limited.

## 2.2. Implementation of School-Based Safety Practices

Schools also play a critical role in promoting safety, with mountain teachers implementing various safety practices within their schools. As one respondent noted, "So, we have DRRM Coordinator Ma'am, so every, every year we conduct emergency drill such as earthquake drill kay kabalu naman ta last year, we were experiencing how many times here in Visayas of earthquake..." (R1) These efforts demonstrate the importance of school-based safety initiatives in promoting a culture of safety.

## 2.3. Lack of Safety Training and Preparedness

Despite these efforts, mountain teachers often lack formal safety training and preparedness programs, making them more vulnerable to risks. As one respondent highlighted, "So far, wala Mam, but before my employment here in Escalante, I was also employed in a private school, sa Toboso. So ra sya nga private school, so the LGU conducted things to do or not to do during the calamity, such as earthquakes, typhoons, and others." (R1) This lack of training can exacerbate the challenges faced by mountain teachers.

## 2.4. Informal Safety Measures and Decision-Making

In the absence of formal safety training, mountain teachers often rely on informal safety measures and decision-making to protect themselves and their students. As one respondent described, "Okay, just maintain my composure. However, as a teacher, I have to maintain my composure to barely think about what I am going to do. Kay, syempre, deep inside, I was scared for my life, but as a teacher, I have to perform my duties to ensure my pupils' safety. Still, unahon jud ang pupils and safety." (R3) This highlights the resourcefulness and adaptability of mountain teachers. Mountain teachers also face challenges related to disaster preparedness, with many lacking formal programs and resources. As one respondent noted, "So, to be honest, Ma'am, if there is a flood on my way to school, we practice to prioritize safety. So, our school head suspends classes. However, if we are already at school and then there is a flood on our way home, we wait for the flood to subside." (R10) This highlights the need for more comprehensive disaster preparedness plans. Also, the peer-based knowledge sharing is an important aspect of safety practices among mountain teachers. As one respondent highlighted, "I came up with this solution, but base pagid sa mga naagyan sa other teachers and other local people here in our school. I also learned that preparation is very important in mountain areas, and yes, effective because it helped me avoid accidents and feel more prepared during emergencies." (R8) This sharing of knowledge and experiences can help promote safety and resilience.

## 2.8. Learning Aid in Difficult Situations

Finally, mountain teachers use creative and improvised learning materials to facilitate understanding and engage learners in difficult situations. As one respondent described, "We have a group chat in our section once the weather is not okay, and there, we advise a sudden class suspension. Of course, I advise my learners not to go to school, especially those learners who will cross the river. Moreover, WeeLMat or Weekly Learning Matrix is a big help as a learning aid, and the DRRM also." (R4) These efforts demonstrate the resourcefulness and dedication of mountain teachers.

## 3. Support, Motivation, and Professional Resilience.

### 3.1. Learners' Impact on Teachers

The determination and resilience of their students are powerful motivators for mountain teachers. As one respondent noted, "What encouraged me to continue teaching in this area is especially my struggling pupils who still try to go to school despite



the situation, particularly those who are financially challenged." (R3) This highlights the important role that learners play in motivating teachers and inspiring them to continue their work, even in the face of challenges.

### 3.2. Parental and Community Support for Safety

Mountain teachers also value the support of parents and the community in promoting safety and well-being. As one respondent emphasized, "Perhaps parents should teach their children at home to stay calm in any situation, even if it is life-threatening." (R1) This highlights the importance of collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community in creating a safe and supportive learning environment.

### 3.3. Institutional and Government Support

However, mountain teachers also need institutional and government support to address infrastructure and resource gaps. As one respondent noted, "I really do not fully understand all the needs of the school, but I truly appreciate the emotional support provided to us by the learners and teachers... I would prioritize asking for infrastructure improvements in the school, such as fences around the campus." (R2) This highlights the need for government agencies to provide resources and support to address the needs of mountain schools.

### 3.4. Incentives and Reward System

Incentives and rewards can also play a significant role in motivating mountain teachers. As respondents noted, "Some teachers shared those simple incentives like money and rewards boosted teachers' participation and performance, while also fostering a sense of pride in their achievements." (R1, R2, R3) This highlights the importance of recognizing and rewarding teachers for their efforts and achievements.

### 3.5. Professional Commitment and Resilience

Despite the challenges they face, mountain teachers are driven by their professional commitment and resilience to provide quality education to learners. As one respondent expressed, "Love for teaching at the same time. Love for the learners here in the mountain, and they need you. If it is not you, who else?" (R6). This highlights the dedication and passion of mountain teachers and the importance of recognizing and supporting their professional commitment and resilience.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### On Challenges in Mountain Schools

The study found that mountain teachers face a range of challenges, including:

1. Difficult travel routes and hazardous terrain conditions, which pose significant risks to their safety and well-being
2. Natural disaster risks, such as unpredictable weather conditions, which can be life-threatening
3. Personal safety concerns, including conflicts, long distances, and limited transportation options, can create a sense of fear and uncertainty, which can make it challenging for teachers to perform their duties
4. Exposure to community-based security threats, such as armed conflicts, which can be traumatic and affect teachers' sense of safety and well-being
5. Low internet connectivity, which can limit access to resources and communication

### On Adaptive Safety Practices and Strategies

Despite these challenges, mountain teachers have developed various adaptive safety practices and strategies, including:

1. Personal coping mechanisms, such as maintaining a positive mindset and composure, to manage stress and anxiety. Self-made proactive approaches to ensuring personal safety, to mitigate risks associated with travel and environmental hazards
2. Implementation of school-based safety practices, including regular emergency drills, to promote a culture of safety
3. Lack of safety training and preparedness, including no proper training before teachers were deployed to their assigned stations
4. Informal safety measures and decision-making, such as relying on personal judgment and experience, to compensate for the lack of formal safety training, and allow teachers to learn from each other's experiences and best practices



5. Learning aid in difficult situations, teachers choose to supplement learning gaps through the Weekly Learning Matrix (WeeLMat)

## On Support, Motivation, and Professional Resilience

The study also found that mountain teachers are motivated by various factors, including:

1. Learners' impact, including their determination and resilience, which inspires teachers to continue their work
2. Parental and community support, which helps create a sense of safety and well-being
3. Institutional and government support, which is needed to address infrastructure and resource gaps
4. Incentives and reward systems, which recognize teachers' efforts and motivate them to improve
5. Professional commitment and resilience, which drive teachers to provide quality education to their students despite challenges

Overall, the study highlights the challenges faced by mountain teachers and underscores the importance of providing support and resources to address them and promote their safety, well-being, and professional resilience.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the complex and challenging context in which mountain teachers work. Despite facing numerous risks and hazards, including difficult travel routes, natural disasters, and community-based security threats, mountain teachers demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability. The study reveals that mountain teachers employ various adaptive safety practices and strategies, including personal coping mechanisms, self-made safety measures, and peer-based knowledge sharing, to manage the challenges they face.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of providing support and resources to mountain teachers to address the challenges they face and promote their safety, well-being, and professional resilience. The study also highlights the critical roles that learners, parents, and the community play in supporting mountain teachers and promoting a safe, supportive learning environment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive safety plan for mountain schools, including emergency response protocols and safety training for teachers.
2. Establish a support system for mountain teachers, including counseling services and peer support groups.
3. Provide incentives like hazard pay and rewards like recognition certificates for mountain teachers who demonstrate excellence in teaching and commitment to their students.
4. Develop and implement programs to promote community engagement and participation in school activities, including parent-teacher associations and community-based safety initiatives.
5. Establish partnerships with local government units and barangay officials to provide tailored survival techniques and first aid training for newly hired mountain teachers before they are deployed to mountainous areas.

By implementing these recommendations, we can help promote the safety, well-being, and professional resilience of mountain teachers and support the provision of quality education to learners in mountainous areas.

## Conflict of Interest

The researchers declared no conflict of interest in the conduct and completion of this qualitative research study.

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