

“KRU KHAM PHET”: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANT FILIPINO TRANSGENDER TEACHERS IN THAILAND

Fredan S. Timoteo¹, Romary R. Lincod, EdD²

Pangasinan State University – Open University Systems

fredantimoteo02@gmail.com¹, gad@psu.edu.ph²

ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand, focusing on the intersection of gender identity, migration, and professional practice. Using a phenomenological research design, the study aimed to understand the challenges and opportunities these educators faced in their professional and personal lives. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five migrant Filipino transgender teachers working in various schools across Thailand. Thematic analysis identified seven key themes: language barriers and communication challenges, cultural and institutional adaptation, acceptance and discrimination, economic and financial struggles, professional challenges and support, personal and psychological impact, and support systems and community networks. Findings revealed that language barriers significantly affected professional interactions and personal relationships, while cultural adaptation brought both difficulties and opportunities for integration. While students and parents generally showed acceptance, internal conflicts within the Filipino community emphasized the need for improved cultural cohesion. Despite receiving higher salaries, financial struggles persisted, highlighting the importance of financial planning and support. Career advancement was often hindered by cultural perceptions and institutional biases, even when professional respect was achieved. The personal and psychological impact of migration and gender transitioning was profound, with hormone therapy and mental health emerging as critical areas of concern. Support systems, including health insurance and LGBTQ+ communities, were found to be essential in enhancing overall well-being and career success. The study recommended that policymakers, educational institutions, and community leaders implement comprehensive support systems, promote cultural competence, and address financial and professional challenges to create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand.

Keywords: - Transgender Educators, Filipino Migrant Teachers, LGBTQ+ Inclusion, Language Barriers, Cultural Barriers.

INTRODUCTION

Transgender individuals who pursue teaching careers demonstrate remarkable resilience and courage, navigating a landscape of progress and persistent challenges. These educators confront institutional barriers and moments of affirmation, shaping their classrooms and communities with unique perspectives and lived experiences. Despite facing discrimination and hostility, they persist, impacting their students' lives and advocating for greater awareness of LGBTQ+ issues. Their presence challenges stereotypes, fosters inclusivity, and paves the way for a more equitable education system and society. Through dedication and determination,

transgender teachers illuminate the complexities of identity, education, and societal transformation, inspiring others to embrace their true selves and contribute to a more inclusive world.

Filipino transgender teachers face unique hurdles, particularly in the context of migration. Although the Philippines is relatively progressive towards gender diversity, transgender individuals often encounter discrimination and limited employment opportunities. Consequently, many seek opportunities abroad for greater acceptance and professional growth. However, migrating as a transgender individual involves complexities such as legal barriers, social stigma, and gender identity-based discrimination. The lack of legal recognition and protections in some countries exacerbates these challenges, leaving migrants vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Despite these obstacles, Filipino transgender teachers who migrate demonstrate extraordinary resilience and determination, enriching their students' educational experiences and advocating for LGBTQ+ rights in their new communities.

This study aims to address the research gap on the intersectionality of migration, gender identity, and professional practice for transgender educators, focusing on migrant transgender Filipino teachers in Thailand. It identifies cultural and language-related challenges faced by these educators and provides a foundation for developing cultural competency training and language support initiatives within educational institutions. Extending existing insights to the context of Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand, this research contributes to targeted interventions that improve their professional and personal experiences. Motivated by observations of transgender friends thriving in Thailand, this research showcases Thailand as a welcoming environment for transgender individuals, offering hope for a happier and more peaceful life within an inclusive educational landscape

Research Questions

This research study sought to provide a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of migrant Filipino transgender teachers and the specific factors that influenced their professional and personal journeys in Thailand.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand in terms of age, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, educational level, subject specialization, number of years of teaching experience, employment status, type of school, length of stay in Thailand, and monthly income?
2. What are the professional and personal challenges faced by migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand's educational system?
3. How does cultural adaptation impact the professional and personal lives of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand?
4. What support systems are available to Filipino migrant transgender teachers in Thailand, and how effective are they in addressing their needs?
5. How does the intersectionality of gender identity, migration, and professional practice

affect the experiences of transgender teachers within Thai schools?

6. What recommendation/s report can be made to educational institutions and policymakers to improve inclusivity and support for transgender teachers in Thailand?

Scope and Delimitations

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand, focusing on the intersection of migration, gender identity, and professional practice within the Thai educational system. Through semi-structured interviews with five purposively selected participants and thematic analysis, the study examined recurring patterns related to their challenges, coping strategies, and experiences of inclusion and discrimination in both personal and professional contexts. The findings provided meaningful insights into the realities of migrant Filipino transgender teachers and contributed to the growing body of literature on LGBTQ+ issues in education, with implications for policy development, educational practices, and the promotion of gender diversity and inclusion. However, the study acknowledged several limitations, including its small sample size, focus on a specific demographic, reliance on self-reported experiences, and scope limited to Filipino transgender teachers working in schools in Thailand, which constrained the breadth of perspectives represented and limited the generalizability of the findings to other populations and contexts.

Review of Related Literatures

Studies on transgender teachers reveal persistent challenges related to discrimination, exclusion, and institutional barriers in educational settings. Scholars such as Stryker (2008), Lester and Schilt (2016), and Morrison (2017) highlight how transgender educators often face marginalization, limited policy support, and struggles in professional advancement. Despite these barriers, research also emphasizes their resilience and advocacy in creating more inclusive educational spaces.

Literature on migration and transgender identities shows that migration involves not only physical relocation but also identity negotiation shaped by gender, culture, and profession. Authors such as Valentine (2007), Ahmed (2006), and Levitt and Ippolito (2014) discuss how migrant transgender individuals experience stress, cultural adaptation challenges, and systemic barriers, while also developing strategies for belonging and survival in host countries.

Research on educational inclusivity and LGBTQ+ rights stresses the need for supportive policies, anti-discrimination measures, and inclusive pedagogies. Studies by Kosciw et al. (2016), Britzman (1995), and hooks (1994) underscore the importance of safe and affirming learning environments for both LGBTQ+ students and educators. These perspectives highlight the role of schools in promoting equity and social justice. Studies on cultural competence and language barriers further emphasize the importance of culturally responsive teaching and language support for migrant educators. Scholars such as Gay (2010), Nieto (2010), and Banks (2015) argue that recognizing diverse cultural identities and addressing linguistic challenges can improve inclusion and professional integration.

Finally, literature on mental health and well-being shows that transgender individuals often face minority stress, internalized stigma, and barriers to affirming support services. However, social support, community advocacy, and access to inclusive environments contribute to resilience and well-being. These studies provide important foundations for understanding the lived experiences of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on several interrelated theories that explain the lived experiences of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand. Central to the framework is **Intersectionality Theory** by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which explains how overlapping identities such as gender identity, migration status, and professional roles shape participants' unique experiences of discrimination, privilege, and belonging. This theory provides a lens for understanding the complexities arising from these intersecting identities.

Supporting this is **Social Identity Theory** by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, which emphasizes how group membership influences self-concept, acceptance, and social interactions. In this study, it helps explain how participants negotiate their identities as transgender individuals, migrants, and educators within Thai schools.

The framework also draws from **Queer Theory**, associated with Teresa de Lauretis, which challenges traditional assumptions about gender and sexuality and recognizes the fluidity of transgender identities. This perspective supports a critical understanding of participants' experiences beyond binary and normative gender expectations.

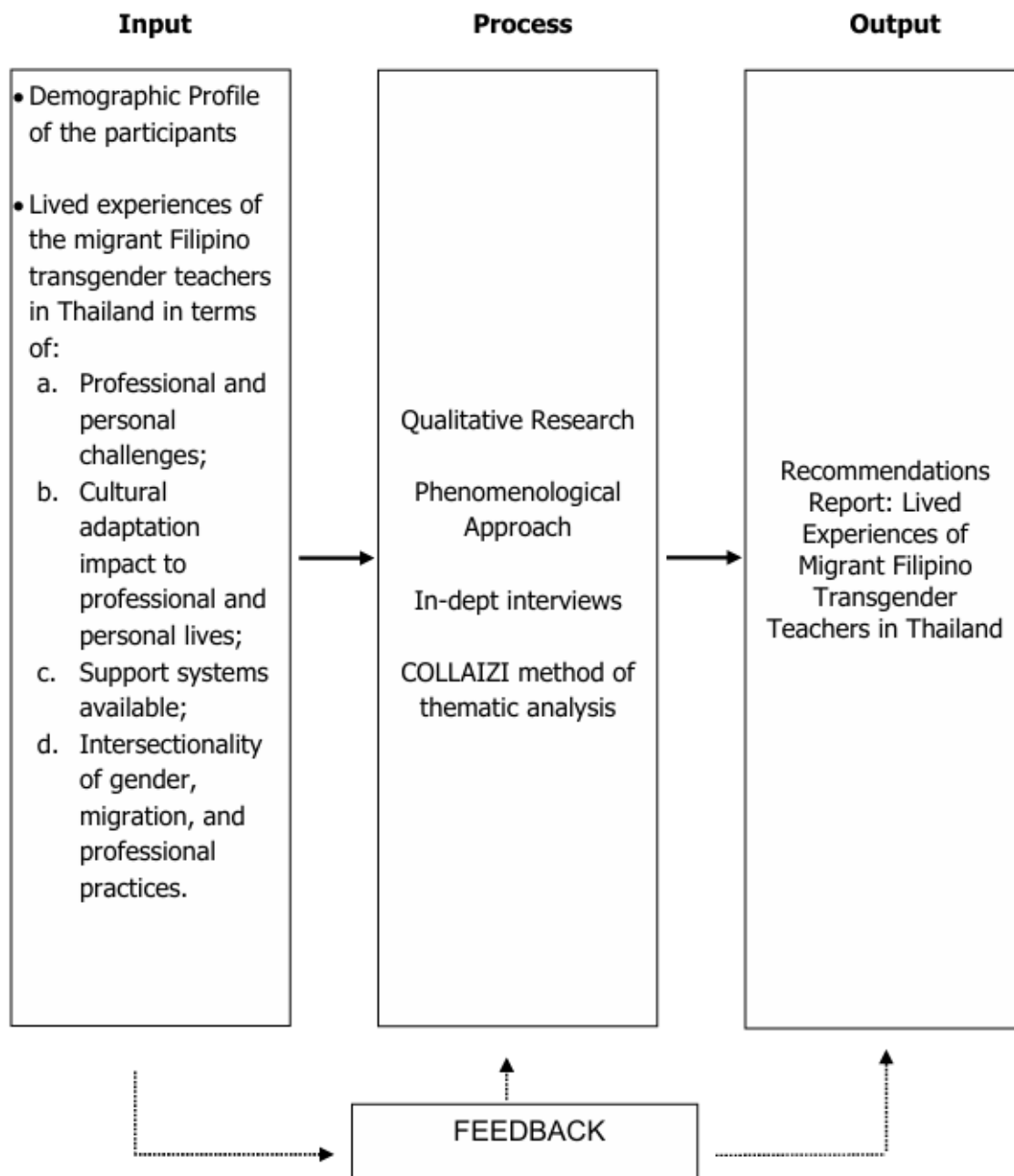
In addition, **Critical Pedagogy** by Paulo Freire positions transgender teachers as agents of social change who can challenge inequalities and contribute to more inclusive educational environments. **Resilience Theory** further explains how participants cope with challenges related to discrimination, migration, and professional adaptation, highlighting their strengths and capacity to thrive. Finally, the **Cultural Competence Framework** underscores the importance of culturally responsive and inclusive educational practices in supporting diverse identities. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive foundation for examining the lived experiences of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand.

Conceptual Framework

This study explores the lived experiences of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand using an Input-Process-Output (IPO) framework. The input includes the participants' demographic profiles and their lived experiences in terms of professional and personal challenges, cultural adaptation, support systems, and the intersectionality of gender identity, migration, and professional practice. These elements provide the foundation for understanding their unique experiences within Thai schools.

The process employs a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach, with in-depth interviews as the primary data-gathering method. Data are analyzed through the Colaizzi method of thematic analysis, which involves organizing, coding, and interpreting participants' narratives to identify significant themes and meanings related to their experiences.

The output of the study is a recommendations report on the lived experiences of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand. The findings aim to provide insights and practical recommendations for policymakers, school leaders, and stakeholders to promote inclusion, support, and equitable opportunities for transgender migrant teachers in the Thai educational system. Feedback from the findings further informs and strengthens the research process.



METHODOLOGY

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of migrant Filipino transgender teachers working in schools in Thailand. The study focused on exploring the intersection of migration, gender identity, and professional practice, particularly the professional and personal challenges they encounter, their experiences in cultural adaptation, the support systems available to them, and how these factors shape their well-being and professional growth. By using a phenomenological approach, the study sought to capture the essence and meaning of participants' lived experiences and contribute insights that may inform policies and practices promoting inclusivity and support for transgender educators in international educational setting.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand. This method, as outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Braun and Clarke (2019), was chosen to uncover the unique perspectives and complexities of participants' experiences, focusing on diversity, inclusion, and social justice within the Thai educational context.

Research Steps

After conducting a thorough review of related literature and identifying gaps in research related to migrant transgender educators, the research design was developed to align with the study's objectives and the context of the Thai educational system. The research employed qualitative data gathering techniques, primarily through semi-structured interviews, to collect rich and detailed descriptions of participants' experiences. The interview process focused on exploring themes related to professional and personal challenges, cultural adaptation, support systems, and the intersectionality of migration, gender identity, and professional practice. Following data collection, the COLLAIZI method was used as a systematic approach for analyzing the qualitative data. This involved collecting responses, organizing interview transcripts, coding significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, and linking annotated instances to identify patterns across participants' narratives. This step-by-step process ensured a structured and rigorous analysis of participants' lived experiences.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The data collection process began with the purposive selection of five migrant Filipino transgender teachers working in different schools in Thailand. Participants were chosen based on their relevance to the study and willingness to share their experiences. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data gathering tool, allowing flexibility for participants to discuss their experiences while ensuring alignment with the research questions. The interviews gathered information related to participants' demographic profile, professional and personal challenges, cultural adaptation experiences, available support systems, and the ways their gender identity and migration status intersected within their teaching profession. Interviews were conducted with participants' informed consent and were documented to preserve the accuracy of responses. Member checking was employed by returning interview summaries or interpretations to participants for validation, ensuring that the collected data accurately reflected their intended meanings and experiences. This process enhanced the credibility and

trustworthiness of the study.

Data Analysis Methods

The study employed thematic analysis using the COLLAIZI method to analyze the qualitative data. Interview responses were transcribed, organized, and systematically coded to identify significant statements and recurring patterns related to participants' lived experiences. These coded responses were grouped into categories and clustered into themes representing major dimensions of the phenomenon under study, including language barriers, cultural adaptation, acceptance and discrimination, financial struggles, professional challenges, mental well-being, and support systems. The analysis involved moving from individual participant narratives to broader thematic interpretations while maintaining fidelity to the original meanings expressed by participants. Member checking and trustworthiness procedures were incorporated to validate the themes and interpretations, ensuring reliability, credibility, and consistency of findings. The use of thematic analysis enabled the researcher to derive meaningful insights and generate a deeper understanding of the experiences of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand.

Validation

Furthermore, validation was achieved through trustworthiness measures commonly used in qualitative research. This included member checking, where participants reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations; credibility procedures to ensure authenticity of findings; and validation of interview responses through careful comparison of themes across participants. The study also employed consistent documentation, reflective analysis, and adherence to phenomenological principles to strengthen the rigor of the research process. These validation procedures ensured that the findings accurately represented participants' experiences and contributed trustworthy insights to the field of educational research.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study was limited by its small sample size of five participants and its exclusive focus on migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other populations or contexts. The study also relied on self-reported experiences gathered through interviews, which may be subject to personal bias or selective recall. In addition, the research did not include perspectives from other stakeholders such as school administrators, colleagues, or students, nor did it examine experiences of transgender teachers from other nationalities. Despite these limitations, the study aimed to provide rich and meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation. Ethical protocols were strictly observed by obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and allowing participants the right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. Ethical considerations also included respectful and accurate representation of participants' narratives, safeguarding their identities, and ensuring that data analysis and reporting honored the integrity and dignity of their lived experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RQ 1. What is the demographic profile of the migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand in terms of age, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, educational level, subject specialization, number of years of teaching experience, employment status, type of school, length of stay in Thailand, and monthly income?

The participants namely Maria (29), Theresa (30), Aurora (30), Ligaya (33), and Bituin (28) represent a relatively young teaching workforce, suggesting adaptability and openness to professional growth. All identified as trans women and were single, while their diverse sexual orientations highlight the importance of considering intersecting identities. This aligns with Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality and the works of Bowleg (2008) and Collins (2015), which emphasize how overlapping identities shape lived experiences. An implication of this finding is that demographic characteristics should be understood as meaningful contexts influencing both personal and professional realities.

Participants' educational backgrounds reflected varied pathways into teaching. Maria specialized in English, Aurora in Social Studies, Ligaya in MAPEH, while Theresa and Bituin also contributed strong backgrounds in English education. With 3 to 7 years of teaching experience, participants represented different stages of professional development. These findings support Ingersoll and Strong (2011), Carletta (2015), and UNESCO (2021), which emphasize the role of competence and support systems in enabling migrant teachers to succeed. This implies that migrant transgender teachers should be recognized not only through marginalized identity but also through their professional expertise.

All participants worked in government schools, suggesting a common employment pathway for Filipino migrant teachers in Thailand. While some literature portrays migrant educators as occupying precarious positions, a contrast emerged in participants' relative employment stability and professional continuity. Their 4.5 to 8 years of stay in Thailand further indicated long-term adaptation rather than temporary mobility, supporting Castles and Miller (2009) and Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013). This implies support systems should address both short-term adjustment and long-term professional well-being.

Monthly income ranging from 25,000 to 35,000 baht suggested relative financial stability, although Maria, Theresa, Aurora, Ligaya, and Bituin associated income with continuing pressures related to migration, healthcare, and personal obligations. This presents a contradiction to assumptions that migration automatically ensures economic security. The implication is that financial well-being should be understood beyond salary levels alone and supported through benefits and institutional assistance.

Overall, the demographic profile was not merely descriptive but provided insight into how identity, migration, and professional practice shaped participants' experiences. Supporting studies affirmed these patterns, while contrasts related to employment stability and financial pressures added depth to existing assumptions about migrant transgender educators in Thailand.

RQ 2. What are the professional and personal challenges faced by migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand's educational system?

Migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand faced interconnected challenges related to language barriers, cultural adjustment, discrimination, financial pressures, and mental health. Maria and Theresa struggled with students' limited English proficiency, while Aurora translated lessons, Ligaya relied on nonverbal strategies, and Bituin experienced misunderstandings with colleagues due to language barriers. This supports Borja (2016), Ulla (2018), and Cummins (2000), which emphasize how language limitations can hinder integration and teacher performance. An implication of this finding is the need for targeted language support and institutional assistance.

Cultural adjustment also posed challenges. Maria described adapting to Thailand's centralized classroom management, while Ligaya recounted cultural misunderstandings among Filipino colleagues. These experiences support Guadalupe (2017) and Ladson-Billings (1995) on the importance of cultural competence. However, a contrast emerged, as participants viewed adaptation not only as a challenge but also as a source of growth and intercultural learning. This implies schools should foster culturally responsive environments rather than expect simple assimilation.

Discrimination was evident in subtle forms of bias. Aurora and Ligaya reported internalized prejudice and misgendering from fellow Filipinos, while Maria, Theresa, Ligaya, and Bituin generally described positive acceptance from Thai society. This supports Eren (2018), Hernandez (2019), and Smith and Johnson (2018), but also presents a contradiction, as participants reported greater acceptance in Thai schools than some literature predicts. This suggests the need for formal protections and intercultural training.

Financial strain remained a recurring concern. Maria, Theresa, and Aurora discussed transition-related costs, while Ligaya faced irregular salary structures and limited health insurance. These findings challenge assumptions that migration automatically improves economic stability and imply the need for stronger institutional support, including financial assistance and health benefits.

Mental health concerns also emerged strongly. Maria, Theresa, and Aurora described stress related to transitioning, while Ligaya and Bituin discussed emotional strain, isolation, and homesickness. These findings align with Meyer (2003), Lee et al. (2020), and Budge et al. (2013), which emphasize minority stress and resilience. At the same time, participants demonstrated coping strategies and agency, suggesting support systems should address mental health risks while strengthening resilience through counseling, community networks, and affirming healthcare.

RQ 3. How does cultural adaptation impact the professional and personal lives of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand?

Cultural adaptation significantly shaped the professional and personal lives of the participants, particularly in relation to language, workplace integration, financial stability, and well-being. Language barriers remained a challenge, as participants relied on strategies such as visual aids, translation, and learning basic Thai to support communication. This supports Borja (2016), Ulla (2018), and Cummins (2000), which emphasize how language limitations affect integration and professional effectiveness. An implication of this finding is the need for stronger language support programs for migrant educators.

Cultural and institutional adaptation also influenced participants' experiences. While Maria, Theresa, and Bituin generally reported acceptance from students, parents, and Thai colleagues, Aurora and Ligaya described internal conflicts and misunderstandings with fellow Filipinos. This supports Guadalupe (2017) and Ladson-Billings (1995) on the importance of cultural competence. However, a contrast emerged, as adaptation was experienced not only as a challenge but also as a source of professional growth and intercultural learning. This implies the need for targeted interventions that strengthen mutual respect and culturally responsive environments.

Professional adaptation brought both opportunities and limitations. Although participants often received respect in their workplaces, some still encountered cultural bias and barriers to advancement. This supports Eren (2018), Hernandez (2019), and Smith and Johnson (2018), while also presenting a contradiction, as participants reported more acceptance than some literature predicts. This suggests the need for inclusive hiring practices and stronger career development support.

Economic and psychological adaptation also carried significant effects. Maria, Theresa, Aurora, Ligaya, and Bituin reported financial pressures related to living costs, healthcare, and family obligations, while also describing stress, isolation, and emotional challenges linked to transitioning and migration. These findings align with Meyer (2003), Lee et al. (2020), and Budge et al. (2013). The implication is that support should extend beyond workplace inclusion to include financial planning, mental health services, and access to affirming healthcare.

Support systems, particularly health insurance and LGBTQ+ community networks, played an important role in helping participants navigate these challenges and build resilience. Overall, the findings suggest that cultural adaptation is both challenging and transformative, requiring inclusive policies and support systems that address both vulnerabilities and strengths among migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand.

RQ 4. What support systems are available to Filipino migrant transgender teachers in Thailand, and how effective are they in addressing their needs?

Several support systems were available to Maria, Theresa, Aurora, Ligaya, and Bituin, particularly in the areas of healthcare, community support, and institutional assistance. Health insurance, including Social Security Office (SSO) coverage and school-provided plans, helped reduce medical expenses, including hormone therapy. Maria, Theresa, and Aurora emphasized its importance in easing financial burdens. This supports Smith and Johnson (2018) and UNESCO (2021), which highlight the role of institutional support systems in promoting inclusion and well-being. An implication of this finding is the need to expand access to comprehensive insurance for migrant transgender teachers.

Specialized clinics such as Honey's Clinic and Tangerine Clinic also provided important medical and counseling support related to transitioning. These findings align with Reisner et al. (2016) and Sevelius (2013), which emphasize the positive impact of access to affirming healthcare on well-being. LGBTQ+ community networks likewise served as important sources of emotional and practical support. Ligaya, Theresa, and Bituin highlighted how these networks reduced isolation and strengthened resilience, supporting Budge et al. (2013) and Testa et al. (2015). This suggests that community-based support remains essential alongside formal services.

Institutional support also contributed positively, as participants described professional respect and, in some cases, special treatment that fostered belonging within their schools. However, a contrast emerged, as support varied across institutions, suggesting that informal support alone may be inconsistent. This implies the need for stronger and more standardized institutional policies.

Despite these supports, financial struggles remained a major concern. Maria, Ligaya, and Theresa reported ongoing pressures related to living costs and transitioning expenses, reflecting a contradiction that support systems improve well-being but do not fully address economic vulnerability. This suggests a need for stronger financial planning resources and broader assistance mechanisms.

Health insurance, specialized clinics, LGBTQ+ communities, and institutional support played vital roles in addressing participants' needs. Supporting studies affirmed these patterns, while persistent financial challenges highlighted areas where support systems remain insufficient and require enhancement.

RQ 5. How does the intersectionality of gender identity, migration, and professional practice affect the experiences of transgender teachers within Thai schools?

The experiences of Maria, Theresa, Aurora, Ligaya, and Bituin reflected the complex interplay of gender identity, migration, and professional practice. In terms of gender identity, positive acceptance from students and parents contributed to job satisfaction and well-being, while Maria and Ligaya also reported internal conflicts within the Filipino community. This aligns with Crenshaw (1989), Bowleg (2008), and Collins (2015), which emphasize how intersecting identities shape experiences of privilege and vulnerability. An implication of this finding is the need for stronger mutual respect and inclusive support within both school and migrant communities.

Transitioning also shaped participants' personal and professional experiences. Aurora and Theresa highlighted emotional and physical effects associated with hormone therapy, emphasizing the importance of supportive environments. These findings align with Meyer (2003), Lee et al. (2020), and Budge et al. (2013), which stress minority stress, resilience, and the importance of affirming support systems.

Migration introduced challenges related to language barriers and cultural integration. Participants described difficulties in communication and adapting to Thai norms, supporting Borja (2016), Ulla (2018), and Guadalupe (2017). However, a contrast emerged, as participants also reported respect from students and positive adaptation experiences, suggesting migration can involve both strain and opportunity. This implies support systems should strengthen both adjustment and empowerment.

Economic and professional realities also shaped participants' experiences. Although salaries in Thailand were often higher than in the Philippines, financial strain remained due to living costs and transitioning expenses, challenging assumptions that migration ensures economic stability. Participants also reported professional respect, though some noted institutional biases affecting career advancement. This supports Eren (2018), Hernandez (2019), and Smith and Johnson (2018), while suggesting a need for inclusive policies, career

development support, and financial assistance.

The findings show that gender identity, migration, and professional practice are deeply interconnected in shaping participants' experiences. Supporting studies affirmed these patterns, while contradictions involving both acceptance and barriers added depth to understanding the realities of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand.

RQ 6. What recommendation/s report can be made to educational institutions and policymakers to improve inclusivity and support for transgender teachers in Thailand?

The findings of the study suggest several recommendations for educational institutions and policymakers to strengthen inclusivity and support systems for transgender teachers in Thailand. First, educational institutions should develop and implement inclusive policies that explicitly protect transgender teachers from discrimination and promote equal opportunities in hiring, career advancement, and workplace treatment. Such policies should also recognize gender diversity and foster a school environment grounded in respect, equity, and inclusion. This is supported by Smith and Johnson (2018), UNESCO (2021), and Eren (2018), which emphasize the importance of institutional policies in promoting inclusion and equal opportunity.

Second, schools should provide cultural competence and sensitivity training for administrators, teachers, and staff to promote greater understanding of transgender identities and reduce bias in educational settings. These programs should also include awareness of the unique experiences of migrant educators, particularly challenges related to cultural adaptation, language barriers, and identity-based discrimination. Strengthening cultural awareness can help create a more supportive and welcoming environment for transgender teachers. This aligns with Guadalupe (2017), Ladson-Billings (1995), Borja (2016), and Ulla (2018).

Third, language support and professional development opportunities should be enhanced to help migrant transgender teachers navigate communication challenges and improve their integration within Thai schools. Providing access to language training, mentorship programs, and professional support networks can strengthen both their teaching effectiveness and sense of belonging in the workplace. This is supported by Cummins (2000), Ingersoll and Strong (2011), and Carletta (2015).

Fourth, educational institutions should strengthen mental health and well-being support by ensuring access to counseling services, health insurance coverage, and gender-affirming healthcare resources. The study highlighted the emotional and physical impact of transitioning, making support services essential for sustaining both personal well-being and professional performance. LGBTQ+ community networks and peer support groups should also be encouraged as important sources of emotional and social support. These findings align with Meyer (2003), Budge et al. (2013), Testa et al. (2015), and Reisner et al. (2016).

Fifth, policymakers should address economic and professional concerns by developing support mechanisms related to financial planning, fair compensation, and career progression. Since participants reported ongoing financial strain and concerns about institutional biases affecting advancement, policies should ensure equitable treatment and create pathways for professional growth for transgender educators. This is supported by Hernandez (2019), Smith and Johnson (2018), and UNESCO (2021).

Lastly, broader advocacy and collaboration among schools, government agencies, and LGBTQ+ organizations should be promoted to advance inclusive educational reforms. These collaborative efforts can help institutionalize support systems, strengthen legal and policy protections, and foster a more equitable educational landscape where transgender teachers can thrive professionally and personally. This aligns with Gutterman (2017) and Jennings and Cramer (2018). Overall, the recommendations emphasize the need for comprehensive, systemic, and sustained efforts to improve inclusivity and support for transgender teachers in Thailand.

SUMMARY

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand through six research questions focusing on demographic profile, challenges, cultural adaptation, support systems, intersectionality, and recommendations for inclusivity. The findings revealed that participants shared common demographic characteristics as relatively young, qualified, and experienced transgender women working primarily in Thai government schools, with stable yet modest incomes and long-term migration experiences. These demographic factors were not merely descriptive but provided an important context for understanding how identity, migration, and professional practice shaped their lived experiences.

The study found that participants faced several interconnected professional and personal challenges, including language barriers, cultural adjustment difficulties, subtle discrimination, financial pressures, and emotional strain. These challenges affected classroom practice, workplace relationships, career opportunities, and personal well-being. Despite these difficulties, participants demonstrated resilience through adaptation strategies, peer support, and commitment to their profession, suggesting that while structural barriers exist, individual coping and perseverance play a significant role in navigating them.

Findings further revealed that cultural adaptation had both practical and transformative impacts on participants' lives. Professionally, adapting to Thai culture improved communication, teaching effectiveness, and workplace relationships. Personally, it contributed to identity affirmation, belonging, and personal growth. Although adaptation involved challenges, it was also viewed as an opportunity for intercultural learning and empowerment, highlighting its dual nature as both a source of stress and a pathway to resilience.

The study also found that participants relied on various support systems, including health insurance, school-based support, peer networks, LGBTQ+ communities, and informal emotional support. These systems were generally effective in addressing immediate practical and psychosocial needs, though they were often informal or incomplete, particularly in addressing structural issues such as career limitations, mental health concerns, and transgender-specific healthcare needs. This suggests the need for more comprehensive and formalized support mechanisms.

A major finding of the study was that participants' experiences were deeply shaped by the intersection of gender identity, migration, and professional practice. These overlapping identities influenced experiences of acceptance, discrimination, belonging, and opportunity within Thai schools. While intersectionality sometimes created layered challenges, it also

fostered resilience, adaptability, and unique professional strengths. The findings showed that participants were not defined solely by marginalization but also by agency, empowerment, and contribution to educational spaces.

Finally, the study generated recommendations for improving inclusivity and support for transgender teachers in Thailand, including stronger anti-discrimination policies, cultural competence training, language and professional support programs, expanded healthcare and mental health services, and partnerships with LGBTQ+ and migrant support networks. Overall, the findings emphasize the need for intersectional, inclusive, and institutionalized approaches that address both the challenges and strengths of migrant Filipino transgender teachers while promoting equity, well-being, and professional recognition in Thai schools.

CONCLUSIONS

- The findings indicate that the participants in this study represent a diverse group of Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand, aged 28 to 33, with varied educational backgrounds, subject specializations, and teaching experiences that reflect both professional competence and adaptability. Despite these differences, they share common experiences shaped by the intersection of gender identity, migration, and professional practice. This conclusion supports Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory, as well as Bowleg (2008) and Collins (2015), which emphasize that overlapping identities shape individuals' experiences of opportunity and vulnerability. It is also consistent with Ingersoll and Strong (2011) and UNESCO (2021), which highlight the importance of recognizing migrant teachers' qualifications and professional contributions. A contradiction to deficit-oriented assumptions in some literature is that participants did not reflect precarity alone but demonstrated relative employment stability and long-term integration. This suggests that migrant transgender teachers should be understood not merely as vulnerable workers but as qualified professionals whose diversity requires responsive and individualized institutional support. The implication is that educational institutions and policymakers should develop data-informed, personalized support systems and professional development programs that reflect the varied realities of migrant teachers.
- The study further concludes that migrant Filipino transgender teachers face significant and interconnected challenges, including language barriers, cultural adjustment difficulties, financial instability, and psychological stress related to migration and gender identity. These challenges affect both professional effectiveness and personal well-being, supporting the findings of Borja (2016), Ulla (2018), Meyer (2003), and Lee et al. (2020), which emphasize the effects of language barriers, minority stress, and inadequate support systems on migrant and transgender individuals. However, a contradiction emerged in that participants did not experience these challenges solely as disabling conditions; they also demonstrated resilience, adaptation, and effective coping strategies. This extends the literature by showing that while structural barriers remain significant, participants actively negotiate and respond to these barriers. The implication is that support must move beyond addressing deficits to include empowering interventions such as language support, financial assistance, mental health services, and inclusive institutional policies that strengthen both well-being and professional growth.

- The findings also conclude that cultural adaptation significantly affects the professional and personal lives of these educators, functioning both as a challenge and a source of transformation. Positive acceptance from the Thai community supports identity affirmation, social belonging, and professional fulfillment, supporting Guadalupe (2017), Gay (2010), and Ladson-Billings (1995), which emphasize the importance of cultural competence and inclusion. At the same time, participants reported internal tensions within the Filipino community and institutional biases that complicated adaptation. A contradiction to assimilation-oriented perspectives in some migration literature is that participants did not view successful adaptation as abandoning their Filipino identity, but rather as balancing adaptation with cultural preservation. This suggests that adaptation is negotiated rather than one-directional. The implication is that schools should support intercultural engagement through cultural orientation, inclusive leadership, and anti-discrimination measures that promote mutual understanding rather than assimilation alone.
- The study concludes that support systems available to Filipino migrant transgender teachers—including health insurance, specialized clinics, school-based support, LGBTQ+ communities, and peer networks—play a critical role in addressing practical, emotional, and professional needs. This supports Reisner et al. (2016), Sevelius (2013), Hendricks and Testa (2012), and Budge et al. (2013), which emphasize the value of affirming healthcare and social support in promoting resilience and well-being. However, a contradiction emerged in that while these systems were viewed as meaningful and effective, they were often informal or incomplete, particularly in addressing structural concerns such as career advancement, comprehensive healthcare, and mental health services. This suggests that existing support systems function more as partial buffers than comprehensive solutions. The implication is that educational institutions and policymakers should strengthen, formalize, and regularly assess these systems while fostering stronger partnerships with LGBTQ+ and migrant support networks to provide holistic and sustained support.
- Finally, the study concludes that the intersectionality of gender identity, migration, and professional practice adds significant complexity to the experiences of transgender teachers in Thailand, shaping experiences of acceptance, discrimination, belonging, and opportunity. This conclusion strongly supports Crenshaw (1989), Joksimović (2020), and Divan et al. (2016), which highlight how intersecting identities can produce layered forms of exclusion. At the same time, a contradiction to deficit-focused interpretations of intersectionality emerged, as participants also framed their intersecting identities as sources of strength, empathy, and professional contribution. This extends the literature by demonstrating that intersectionality is not solely about compounded disadvantage but also about agency and resilience. The implication is that institutions should adopt intersectional and strengths-based approaches, including training programs, inclusive policies, and equitable practices that recognize both the challenges and contributions of transgender migrant educators. Through these measures, a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable environment can be created for transgender teachers within Thai schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve inclusivity and support for transgender teachers, recommendations should be actionable and grounded in both participants' lived experiences and supporting literature. A primary recommendation is the development of clear inclusive policies with anti-discrimination protections, equal opportunity provisions, and monitoring mechanisms. This supports Smith and Johnson (2018), UNESCO (2021), and Kosciw et al. (2016). A contradiction in the findings is that participants often experienced interpersonal acceptance even where formal protections were limited; however, such support remained inconsistent without institutional backing. The implication is that inclusivity should be formalized through policy integration and measurable indicators of progress.

Practical implementation should involve pilot programs such as mentoring systems, language support, and inclusive leadership training before broader adoption. This aligns with Ingersoll and Strong (2011), Borja (2016), and Ulla (2018), which emphasize structured support mechanisms. While participants often relied on personal resilience, a contradiction emerged in that individual coping did not replace systemic support. The implication is that institutions should invest in structured and scalable interventions rather than depend on individual adaptation alone.

Comprehensive cultural competence and diversity training should also be strengthened. This supports Guadalupe (2017), Gay (2010), and Banks (2015), which highlight culturally responsive practices. Although participants often developed intercultural competence informally, biases within institutions remained. This suggests formal training remains necessary and should be evaluated regularly through feedback and outcomes assessment.

Advocacy campaigns are likewise recommended to raise awareness and promote recognition of migrant Filipino transgender teachers' contributions. This aligns with Gutterman (2017) and Jennings and Cramer (2018). A contradiction in the findings is that participants were not only marginalized individuals needing protection but also resilient professionals. The implication is that advocacy should move beyond deficit narratives and highlight both challenges and strengths.

The findings further support integrating recommendations into existing educational policies, alongside continuous review and improvement of support systems. This aligns with UNESCO (2021) and Divan et al. (2016). Since support systems already exist but remain uneven, the implication is not only to create new supports but improve their adequacy and responsiveness through monitoring and clear benchmarks.

Additional focus should include technology for language learning, expanded access to gender-affirming healthcare and mental health services, and collaboration with community organizations. These recommendations are supported by Reisner et al. (2016), Sevelius (2013), and Meyer (2003). A contradiction to narrow institutional approaches is that participants often relied on informal networks outside schools, suggesting a broader, intersectional support framework is necessary for long-term well-being and professional success.

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