

# Exploring the Experience Among Kindergarten Teachers in Selected Private Preschools in Baguio City

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**Abstract.** Kindergarten education in the Philippines provides a vital foundation for lifelong learning and holistic child development. However, private preschool teachers often encounter unique and understudied challenges in implementing the Philippine Early Childhood Development Checklist (PECD). These challenges include large class sizes, diverse learner needs, increasing administrative responsibilities, and growing parental expectations. While existing studies have largely focused on public school settings, limited research has examined the experiences of teachers in private preschools, particularly in urban areas such as Baguio City. Understanding these experiences is essential in strengthening early childhood education and ensuring that developmental assessment practices effectively support young learners. This qualitative descriptive study explored the lived experiences of ten kindergarten teachers from selected private preschools in Baguio City. The study addressed three research questions focusing on the challenges teachers encounter in implementing the Philippine Early Childhood Development Checklist, the perceived effects of these challenges on children's developmental competencies, and the coping strategies teachers employ in their daily practice. Data were collected through semi-structured written interviews that allowed participants to share descriptions of their experiences and perspectives. The responses were then analyzed using the thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke to identify recurring patterns and themes. Four major themes emerged from the analysis. Teachers reported several challenges in implementing the checklist, including limited time, large class sizes, and difficulty assessing socio-emotional development. Participants also described heavy workloads and institutional pressures that affected teaching effectiveness. Teachers observed delays in children's motor, self-help, and socio-emotional skills when adequate support was lacking. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated resilience through differentiated instruction, peer collaboration, and advocacy for stronger institutional support and professional development.

## Introduction

The world recognizes early childhood education as the essential base for continuous learning and individual growth and social connection. Children develop essential cognitive, social, and emotional abilities during this period, which determine their future academic achievements and well-being. Sustainable Development Goal 4 emphasizes that all children must have equal access to high-quality early childhood education by 2030. The worldwide educational priority emphasizes how kindergarten teachers must establish supportive learning spaces that promote complete development in young students.

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The Philippine government established kindergarten as part of the K to 12 Basic Education Program to ensure equal access to quality early learning experiences for all students. The Philippine Early Childhood Development (PECD) checklist functions as a standardized framework that directs teaching methods while evaluating developmental results and supports inclusive learning spaces for early childhood facilities. The framework depends on kindergarten teachers to implement it, but they face multiple challenges in balancing teaching methods, emotional support, and institutional requirements.

The existing literature shows that teachers encounter multiple obstacles, which include insufficient instructional materials and overcrowded classrooms and diverse student needs and administrative work emotional exhaustion (Caingcoy, 2022; Ansari et al., 2022; Abayan et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). These challenges affect both the instructional delivery quality and teacher motivation levels as well as their retention rates and job satisfaction. Research indicates that preschool teachers who experience emotional exhaustion deliver inferior quality interactions with their students (Ansari et al., 2022) and insufficient teaching materials lead to ineffective lesson implementation (Abayan et al., 2021). The current situations demonstrate the immediate necessity to enhance teacher support systems because they protect early childhood education instructional quality.

Research about public kindergarten programs dominates the Philippine context, but private preschool teachers remain understudied in existing studies. The professional experiences of teachers in private institutions face unique challenges because these institutions operate under different conditions that include parental expectations and varying resource availability. The delivery of early childhood education through private preschools in Baguio City requires more research about teacher experiences in these educational settings. Most previous studies use quantitative methods, which may fail to detect the detailed challenges teachers face during their everyday work.

This study dives into an important area by using a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the real challenges faced by kindergarten teachers in certain private preschools in Baguio City. It also looks at the strategies these educators use to tackle those challenges. By focusing on the insights of seasoned teachers, this research aims to provide findings that are not only grounded in real experiences but also practical for everyday use. Grounded in the principles of Sustainable Development Goal 4 and enriched by theories related to emotional labor, teacher effectiveness, and the quality of instruction, the study aspires to add to the ongoing conversation about enhancing early childhood education.

The findings we expect to uncover could have significant impacts on both practice and policy. On the institutional side, this research aims to guide school administrators in creating professional development programs that truly meet teachers' needs, ensuring they have the right resources and fostering supportive school cultures. For policymakers, the insights will provide localized evidence that can help shape initiatives in line with both global and national quality assurance standards. Ultimately, this research highlights how crucial it is to empower kindergarten teachers through effective leadership, resource allocation, and collaborative efforts, ensuring that all children can access meaningful and high-quality early learning experiences.

### *Kindergarten Education in the Philippine Context*

Kindergarten education in the Philippines really plays a vital role in setting the stage for lifelong learning. Back in 2012, the government passed Republic Act No. 10157, also known as the Kindergarten Education Act, which made a year of kindergarten mandatory in the basic education system (Department of Education [DepEd], 2016). This law emphasizes that every Filipino child deserves access to quality early learning experiences that will help them transition smoothly into Grade 1 and beyond. To support this, the Philippine Early Childhood Development (PECD) checklist was introduced. It acts both as a tool for assessing development and as a guide for teaching practices, making sure they're in tune with children's growth milestones (Escalona, 2022).

Now, while this framework sets a standard, the way it's put into practice can look quite different in private preschools. This variation often comes down to factors like available resources, management styles, and what parents expect. For instance, in urban areas like Baguio City, some private schools boast modern facilities and a wide range of teaching materials, while others are facing challenges due to tight budgets and lack of support. This gap can really impact how well teachers can stick to those PECD standards. As Navarro (2022) pointed out, the quality of early childhood education isn't just about having a solid curriculum; it's also about the real-life situations that teachers encounter in their schools. So, digging into the experiences of kindergarten teachers in private preschools is crucial if we want to see how national policies actually play out in the classroom.

### *Pedagogical and Professional Challenges of Kindergarten Teachers*

Kindergarten teachers wear many hats. They're responsible for delivering lessons, managing the classroom, providing

emotional support, and collaboration with families. However, research has shown that teachers struggle to meet all these demands. Studies reveal that the lack of instructional materials remains a common concern, forcing teachers to improvise or create their own resources at personal cost (Abayan et al., 2021). Additionally, teachers often report large class sizes and diverse learner needs, which make individualized instruction difficult (Duplon et al., 2022). Research also highlights that classroom management and behavioral challenges remain significant concerns for kindergarten teachers.

Classroom management and behavioral issues further complicate teachers' work. Agbaria (2021) found that effective classroom management among kindergarten teachers is strongly associated with emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, suggesting that teachers' personal competencies significantly influence their ability to maintain a productive learning environment. Similarly, Aksoy (2020) reported that preschool teachers frequently encounter challenging behaviors that require varied discipline strategies and professional skills to address effectively. These findings highlight the importance of continuous professional development in classroom management and behavioral intervention. Furthermore, Akter (emphasized that kindergarten teachers face numerous challenges, including time constraints, heavy workloads, and increasing educational demands, which necessitate stronger institutional and community support to sustain quality instruction.

Emotional labor also represents a significant challenge in early childhood education. Ansari et al. (2022) found that emotionally exhausted preschool teachers were less effective in providing quality instructional and emotional support, thereby impacting children's learning outcomes. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2022) demonstrated that teacher stress and negative emotions were associated with job dissatisfaction and even illness, highlighting the direct impact of teacher well-being on professional effectiveness. In private preschools, these challenges are further compounded by institutional pressures and heightened parental expectations, where teachers are often evaluated not only by academic performance but also by the satisfaction of parents and administrators (Ren & Li, 2023). To cope with these challenges, many teachers turn to strategies like collaborating with peers, improvising resources, and being flexible in their teaching methods. It's essential to document these approaches, as they can inform systemic changes that better support teacher resilience and enhance the quality of instruction.

Parental involvement also plays a crucial role in kindergarten education. According to Ekinci-Vural and Dogan-Altun (2021), active collaboration between teachers and parents enhances children's academic and socio-emotional development. However, the study noted that maintaining consistent parental participation can be challenging due to differences in parents' availability, expectations, and communication styles. This adds another layer of responsibility for kindergarten teachers, who must balance instructional duties with building strong home-school partnerships.

Leadership support within schools further influences teachers' professional experiences. Igoy-Escalona (2022) emphasized that effective leadership frameworks in kindergarten education provide teachers with guidance, resources, and professional development opportunities necessary to address classroom challenges. Supportive administration fosters teacher motivation and instructional quality, whereas weak leadership may contribute to stress, limited innovation, and difficulty implementing developmentally appropriate practices.

To cope with these challenges, many teachers turn to strategies like collaborating with peers, improvising resources, and being flexible in their teaching methods. Teacher well-being is also essential in sustaining effectiveness. Nong et al. (2022) found that engagement in leisure activities significantly reduces job stress and promotes sustainable well-being among preschool teachers. Supporting teachers' mental health and work-life balance enables them to perform their roles more effectively and maintain a positive learning environment for young children. Documenting these approaches is essential, as they can inform systemic changes that better support teacher resilience and enhance the quality of instruction.

### *Implications for Early Childhood Education Reform*

Kindergarten teachers are grappling with some ongoing issues that highlight deeper systemic problems that go beyond just what's happening in their own classrooms. For instance, the PECD checklist. It lays out significant developmental milestones for young children. The problem is that, implementing these in real life hinges a lot on teacher's level of readiness, the kind of support they get from their schools, and what resources are on hand (Escalona, 2022). Reforms may remain ambitious rather than innovative if these fundamental cause are not addressed.

In order to reform early childhood education, both institutional and human resource development must be prioritized. First, policymakers must ensure consistent provision of teaching materials and infrastructure, particularly in private schools that operate under varied funding conditions (Navarro, 2022). Second, there is a need for continuous professional development programs that enhance teachers' competencies in pedagogy, classroom management, and socio-emotional support (Caingcoy, 2022). Third, interventions to strengthen teacher well-being such as mental health programs, reduced

administrative load, and fair compensation—are essential to sustaining motivation and preventing burnout (Ntim et al., 2024).

The study aims to provide local insights that can enhance education by closely examining the daily experience of kindergarten teachers in private preschools in Baguio City. The findings should help the administrators figure out how to build good support systems, let teachers feel stronger so they can handle things better, and provide the policy makers with evidence-based recommendations. Ultimately, empowering kindergarten teachers with the help of resources, chances for professional development, and institutional support is essential to reaching the objectives of inclusive and excellent early childhood education.

## Methodology

This research used a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate how kindergarten teachers in private preschools of Baguio City experienced their work. The researcher selected qualitative research because it enabled her to gather deep insights about teachers' difficulties and methods for implementing the Philippine Early Childhood Development (PECD) checklist. The research design was suitable because it aimed to describe professional realities without changing variables or proving cause-and-effect relationships.

The research took place in selected private preschools located in Baguio City, which served as an educational center in Northern Luzon, Philippines. The researcher selected these institutions because they represented diverse levels of resources, management approaches, and parental expectations, which created multiple scenarios to study teacher experiences. The study included kindergarten teachers who had taught for at least five years to obtain reflective early childhood education insights. The researcher selected ten teachers through purposive sampling because this number provided enough diversity while achieving thematic saturation.

The researcher used semi-structured written interviews to collect data, which she personally delivered to selected kindergarten schools. The instrument had two sections: the first part collected demographic and professional background information, and the second part included open-ended questions to obtain detailed accounts of experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. The semi-structured written interview guide (see Appendix A) consisted of demographic items followed by open-ended questions exploring challenges in PECD implementation, their impact on developmental outcomes, and teachers' coping strategies. The interview guide received expert validation for content validity before undergoing a pilot test to verify its clarity and relevance. Teachers were given sufficient time to reflect and respond, and clarifications were sought when necessary to ensure accuracy.

Responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework of familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, definition, and reporting. This method was chosen because it allowed for the identification of recurring patterns and insights within qualitative data. To strengthen credibility, coding was validated by an independent peer researcher, and member-checking was conducted by sharing summaries of interpretations with participants for confirmation.

Ethical standards were observed throughout the research process. Participants were fully informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights before providing consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using pseudonyms and removing identifiable details from the data. Participation was voluntary, and teachers were assured of the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The study adhered to the ethical principles of the American Psychological Association (2017) and complied with institutional research ethics protocols.

## Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings derived from the semi-structured written interviews conducted with ten (10) experienced kindergarten teachers from selected private preschools in Baguio City. The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. Four major themes emerged: (1) Multifaceted Implementation Challenges in the PECD Checklist, (2) Impact of Workload and Institutional Pressures on Teaching Quality, (3) Consequences for Children's Developmental Outcomes, and (4) Teacher-Driven Coping Mechanisms and Desired Support Systems. The results are integrated with existing literature to contextualize the lived realities of private preschool teachers in the private sector.

### *Theme 1: Multifaceted Implementation Challenges in the PECD Checklist*

All participants in the study unanimously described the implementation of the Philippine Early Childhood Development (PECD) checklist as highly demanding and often unrealistic given the day-to-day realities of private kindergarten classrooms. Teachers consistently pointed to four interconnected challenges that made faithful administration of the tool feel nearly impossible: severe time constraints, extraordinarily large class sizes, highly diverse learner profiles, and inadequate material and professional resources. The most frequently cited structural barriers were time and class size, with teachers routinely managing 25–30 children per section and, in some cases, up to 58 learners across morning and afternoon sessions. As one teacher explained, assessing each child individually across all seven developmental domains simply could not be done within regular teaching hours.

This becomes apparent through the following remarks:

*Teacher A: "It takes a lot of time to implement and accomplish the PECD considering that I am handling a large-sized class."*

*Teacher G: "Limited time to observe and record each child's progress in all aspects"*

*Teacher J: "Large(28 students in A.M and 30 students in P.M)"*

*Teacher F: "Limited time, large class, diverse learner needs, difficulty observing skills"*

These responses underscore the mismatch between the PECD's rigorous requirements and the high-enrollment realities of private preschools.

Among the seven PECD domains, socio-emotional development stood out as the most challenging to implement and assess, with teachers describing its subjectivity, mood-dependence, and strong influence from family/home factors. The checklist's rigid indicators offered little flexibility for contextual variations.

This challenge becomes apparent through the remarks made by the following respondents:

*Teacher E : "Socio emotional because these can change depending on their mood or situation."*

*Teacher H: "Socio-emotional area is the most challenging because learners have different personalities and emotional maturity level."*

*Teacher I: "Socio-Emotional Development – Children have different moods, their behavior changes/ varies from time to time, managing their diverse/ different emotions everyday takes time and we need to know the cause behind those emotions..."*

*Teacher J: "The most challenging area of the PECD checklist for me is the social-emotional skills domain... learners have different family backgrounds and experiences, which affect their ability to share, take turns, manage emotions..."*

These accounts illustrate why socio-emotional competencies feel particularly difficult to standardize, extending prior observations of emotional labor in diverse classrooms.

These results corroborate Ren and Li (2023) on intensified emotional labor in fee-paying early childhood settings, while also aligning with international studies (Ansari et al., 2022; Jeon et al., 2022) showing that high teacher–child ratios and heterogeneous classrooms increase emotional labor and reduce assessment fidelity. They further extend Philippine-specific observations of Abayan et al. (2021) and Escalona (2022) into the under-researched private preschool context, and echo Caingcoy's (2022) call for reduced administrative burden to protect instructional time and enable more accurate PECD implementation.

### *Theme 2: Impact of Administrative Workload and Institutional Pressures on Teaching Effectiveness*

Administrative demands consumed disproportionate time, leaving little for creative planning or child interaction, and often led to stress and reduced focus.

This challenge becomes apparent through the remarks made by the following respondents:

*Teacher C: "I lose 10-15 hours a week just on paperwork. Lots of paper works."*

*Teacher H: "Administrative workload took lots of time compared to the actual number of our teaching hours."*

*Teacher J: "Workload, like creating lesson plans, preparing reports, and completing assessment checklists, affects my teaching effectiveness because it reduces the time I can spend observing and supporting each child "*

In private settings, parental pressures amplified this, with one teacher noting:

*Teacher C: "Because it's a private laboratory school, a single complaint from an influential parent can trigger an immediate memo or investigation."*

In private schools, these pressures were intensified by additional market-driven expectations and accountability mechanisms. Teachers reported facing intense parental demands for rapid and visible academic progress often pushing for skills well beyond what is developmentally appropriate for five-year-olds coupled with the constant fear that a single complaint from an influential or high-paying parent could trigger an immediate memo, formal investigation, or other disciplinary measures. As one teacher succinctly put it, "A single complaint from an influential parent can trigger an immediate memo or investigation," highlighting a climate of professional vulnerability in which compliance with documentation and parental satisfaction frequently took precedence over sound pedagogical judgment. This combination of suffocating paperwork and heightened institutional sensitivity to parental feedback left private-school teachers feeling caught between conflicting priorities: fulfilling administrative and market expectations on one hand, and protecting children's developmental needs and their own professional autonomy on the other.

These results corroborate Ren and Li (2023) on intensified emotional labor in fee-paying early childhood settings and echo Caingcoy's (2022) call for reduced administrative burden to protect instructional time.

### *Theme 3: Consequences for Children's Developmental Outcomes*

Teachers vividly illustrated how the compounded pressures of large classes, crushing paperwork, and limited resources directly delayed or unevenly distributed children's attainment of key PECD competencies. In the motor domain, children who required daily fine-motor practice such as manipulating play-dough, threading beads, or using scissors safely often remained dependent on adult help for months longer than necessary because teachers, stretched across 30–50 learners, could not provide the repeated one-on-one guidance these activities demand. Self-help skills like eating without spilling, tidying up toys, or using the toilet independently were frequently deprioritized entirely; when teachers were consumed by behavior management or racing to finish administrative forms after class, these foundational routines received little systematic reinforcement. In the cognitive and language domains, children arriving with minimal home literacy or oral-language exposure fell further behind as teachers lacked the time to offer individualized reading support, storytelling circles, or extended conversations that could close early gaps. Perhaps most concerning was the socio-emotional domain, where children with behavioral challenges or short attention spans routinely missed critical opportunities for conflict resolution, turn-taking, and emotional coaching because teachers were simply too overwhelmed to facilitate guided social play or intervene consistently in the moment.

Teachers described how time poverty and divided attention led to slower or uneven progress, particularly in self-help, fine motor, and socio-emotional areas—skills that require repeated, individualized reinforcement.

This challenge becomes apparent through the remarks made by the following respondents:

*Teacher C: "Could not hold pencil properly, drew only scribbles. Needed daily play-dough, threading beads and scissor practice."*

*Teacher C: "Things like 'eats without spilling much', 'puts toys away without reminder', or 'goes to toilet along' suffer when I'm too busy filling out forms..."*

*Teacher F: "Some pupils cry when they get frustrated."*

*Teacher J: "Some learners with short attention spans couldn't finish activities, which affected their progress in reading, writing, and counting."*

These situations highlight tangible delays, aligning with research on how teacher burnout reduces responsive interactions critical for development.

Although teachers stressed that most children eventually "catch up" by the end of the kindergarten year through sheer exposure and peer modeling, they unanimously agreed that the pace of development was markedly slower than it could have been in smaller classes with adequate support and lower administrative loads. This slower trajectory, they warned, leaves many children entering Grade 1 at a distinct disadvantage, particularly in self-regulation and foundational literacy skills. Their observations align closely with Ansari et al. (2022), who found that teacher burnout and chronic time poverty significantly reduce the frequency and quality of responsive teacher-child interactions, the very interactions that drive developmental gains in early childhood. In essence, the structural constraints teachers face do not merely create adult

frustration; they translate into tangible, measurable delays in the very competencies the PECD checklist is meant to monitor and promote.

#### *Theme 4: Teacher-Driven Coping Mechanisms and Desired Support Systems*

Despite operating under intense systemic constraints, kindergarten teachers displayed extraordinary agency, resourcefulness, and commitment to their learners' development. They routinely differentiated instruction through play-based activities, small-group rotations, songs, movement breaks, and abundant visual aids; improvised open-ended materials from recycled objects; and spent their own money to ensure children had access to crayons, blocks, or storybooks. Peer collaboration emerged as an emotional and practical lifeline, with teachers describing how they "literally are each other's lifeline" through shared lesson plans, co-created resources, and mutual venting sessions that kept burnout at bay. Many developed time-saving tools such as tabular PECD tracking charts and adopted personal mindfulness practices to preserve the patience required for responsive teaching in chaotic classrooms.

Teachers demonstrated remarkable resourcefulness through differentiation, improvisation, and peer support.

Key strategies mentioned:

*Teacher A: "Having a tabular chart of all the domains and side by side with the pupils' names. IT helped to assess them in much lesser time."*

*Teacher C: "We are literally each other's lifeline. We share everything: syllabus, instructional materials, power point presentations."*

*Teacher J: "To overcome these challenges, I use strategies like differentiated activities, small-group instruction, and hands-on learning... incorporate songs, movement, and visual aids"*

For systemic improvements, teachers prioritized smaller classes and aides:

*Teacher C: "Cap Kinder Class Size at 20 Maximum (with a full-time teacher aide starting at 15 pupils)"*

*Teacher D: "Mandate Paid Non-Teaching Hours Built into the Load." (Teacher D)*

*Teacher F: "Presence of shadow teacher, most especially for those with assessed or diagnosed special needs."*

These priorities reinforce calls for investment in teacher conditions to elevate outcomes.

When asked what systemic changes would genuinely lighten their load and elevate child outcomes, teachers offered a clear, passionately consistent set of priorities, ranked here by how frequently each was mentioned: (1) dramatically smaller class sizes capped at 20 pupils, with full-time teacher aides mandated for any section above 15; (2) dedicated, paid non-teaching hours each week explicitly protected for planning, assessment, and documentation; (3) updated, age-appropriate, and plentiful hands-on materials plus functional technology; (4) regular, high-quality professional development centered on differentiated instruction, inclusive practices, authentic play-based assessment, trauma-informed approaches, and socio-emotional coaching; (5) drastic reduction of administrative paperwork coupled with user-friendly digital reporting systems; (6) salaries and benefits that reflect the intense cognitive and emotional labor of the role; (7) mandatory parent-education programs to align home expectations with developmental science; (8) specialized SPED training and dedicated shadow teachers for children with identified needs; and (9) robust mental-health support for teachers themselves, including recognition events, team-building, and wellness programs. These teacher-generated recommendations echo global evidence from the OECD (2018) and UNESCO (2021), as well as recent local research (Ntim et al., 2024), all of which conclude that sustainable investment in teachers' working conditions, resources, and professional growth remains the single most powerful lever for raising the quality of early childhood education.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

This study confirms that kindergarten teachers in private preschools in Baguio City operate under intense structural and emotional pressures that significantly hinder full implementation of the PECD checklist and, by extension, the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 4 and Republic Act 10157's vision of universal quality early childhood education. While teachers exhibit extraordinary resilience and pedagogical creativity, their efforts cannot fully compensate for large classes, excessive paperwork, inadequate resources, and misaligned expectations.

The findings underscore an urgent need for multi-level intervention: (a) policy reforms that regulate private-sector class sizes and mandate non-teaching hours, (b) institutional investment in materials, aides, and digital documentation systems, (c) expanded, targeted professional development, and (d) cultural shifts in parental and administrative expectations toward developmental appropriateness rather than premature academics.

Ultimately, empowering kindergarten teachers through better working conditions is not merely a matter of teacher welfare, it is the single most powerful lever for ensuring that every Filipino child receives the high-quality, equitable early learning experience to which they are entitled.

The findings of this study carry far-reaching implications for research, policy, practice, and advocacy in Philippine early childhood education. For future research, the preliminary nature of these qualitative insights underscores the urgent need for more robust longitudinal studies that incorporate direct classroom observation, child outcome measures, and larger, stratified samples across public and private sectors, urban and rural areas, and varying socioeconomic contexts; only through such designs can researchers precisely quantify how teacher workload, class size, and administrative burden affect PECD attainment and subsequent Grade 1 readiness. At the policy level, the stark disconnects between the visionary goals of Republic Act 10157 and the daily realities documented here demands an immediate, evidence-informed review of PECD implementation guidelines, especially the socio-emotional domain and the extension of the same regulatory rigor currently applied to public schools to the largely unregulated private preschool sector, including enforceable standards on class size, teacher aides, and non-teaching time.

In practice, the results send an unequivocal message to private preschool owners and administrators: teacher welfare can no longer be treated as peripheral to financial considerations. Long-term institutional sustainability and educational quality hinge on retaining skilled educators through reasonable class sizes, equitable compensation, protected planning periods, and supportive rather than punitive management cultures. Finally, for advocacy, the teachers' voices powerfully reframe the conversation from celebrating individual resilience to demanding collective entitlement; teacher organizations, academic institutions, and civil-society groups must amplify these grounded, practitioner-generated recommendations to shift national discourse and resource allocation toward systemic support for the adults who deliver early childhood education. Without such concerted, multi-level action, the promise of universal, high-quality kindergarten in the Philippines will remain aspirational rather than achievable.

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## **Data Availability Statement**

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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## Appendices

No appendices are included in this article.