



## The Battle of Setbacks of Success: Academic Experiences of Teachers as Graduate Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined the experiences and challenges of graduate students who are concurrently employed as full-time teachers. Utilizing a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were gathered through focus group discussions with selected informants, and thematic analysis was employed to identify key patterns in their lived experiences. The findings revealed four primary themes: (1) time and schedule management, (2) financial constraints, (3) mental and emotional stress, and (4) lack of institutional support.

Participants consistently reported difficulties in balancing academic demands with teaching responsibilities, leading to exhaustion, missed academic deadlines, and limited personal time. Financial concerns, particularly for those serving as family breadwinners, emerged as a significant barrier to academic progress. Emotional and mental stress was prevalent, often stemming from cumulative responsibilities and high expectations from both family and professional environments.

Moreover, the absence of structured institutional support, mentorship, and academic accommodations heightened feelings of isolation and reduced motivation among participants. These findings underscore the necessity for educational institutions to adopt more flexible, inclusive, and responsive systems that recognize the dual roles of teacher-learners.

Recommendations include revising academic schedules, providing targeted financial aid, enhancing mental health resources, and implementing mentorship programs. The study contributes to the growing discourse on supporting adult learners in higher education and calls for systemic reforms to promote equity, wellness, and academic success for working graduate students.

Future research should focus on longitudinal tracking and institutional comparisons to further explore how varying support structures impact academic persistence and well-being in this population.

### INTRODUCTION

Teachers need to enhance their knowledge and capabilities. Enrolling in the graduate school help them explore the infinite opportunities which ablaze their teaching competencies. However, teachers have multiple responsibilities aside from teaching. Sometimes, they are overwhelmed with the demand of work and requirements given by their professors in the graduate school.

Graduate studies promote self-identity especially to the path to where these teachers have to take (Magar et al., 2024). Using the Structural Equation Model, Collier and Blanchard (2024) found out that factors such as mentor support and sense of belonging were the latent constructs (Mulgan et al., 2016). These recognize the impact towards students' well-being and in creating a more inclusive campus climate (Shapira & Amzalag, 2025).

In addition, Collier and Blanchard (2024) and McGee et al. (2019) provided recommendations related to financial support, mental health counseling, and access and opportunity in order to enhance graduate student success (Collier & Blanchard, 2023; Hatemi & McDermott, 2025). Based on their experiences, they perceived their studies positively through stimulating, enjoyable, and interactive lectures (Wynne & Garrow, 2024). Although, there are some negative effects which lead them to disconnect due to pressure and some circumstances (Haley et al., 2024; Hodges et al., 2025).

Moreover, the academic experiences of teachers as graduate students will only be limited in navigating on their setbacks and success. Similar studies probed on the development of graduate students' self-efficacy (Laurencelle & Scanlan, 2018), on stress and coping (Cavalho et al., 2024; Macias, 2020), and on emotional experiences by Hinson (2024). However, all of which presented the status of international graduate students. Hence, the aforesaid justifications provided the gap of the study.

This study underscores the experiences of graduate students in the local setting. Understanding their journey will encourage more teachers engage into professional development by pursuing graduate studies. This paper also encourages the promotion of support system and work-life balance among teachers as graduate students.

### Research Questions

This qualitative study aims to navigate the journey of teachers as graduate students on their seatbacks and success. Specifically, it explores the following sub-problems:

#### Phase 1 The Journey of Educators: Balancing Challenges and Triumphs in Graduate Studies

1. What challenges do teachers face during their graduate studies?
2. How do teachers navigate the challenges during their graduate studies?
3. What lessons do they take away for their future professional development?

#### Phase 2 Support Systems and Work-Life Balance in Graduate Studies

1. What support system do teachers need as they balance their graduate studies and teaching responsibilities?
2. How do educators manage the competing demands of their graduate studies, teaching, and personal lives?

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## METHODOLOGY

This chapter indicates the research design, locale of the study, participants, data gathering instrument, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

### Research Design

#### Research Participants

The participants of the study were the 25 teachers who are currently enrolled in their masteral in graduate studies. They were take part in the Key Informant Interview (KII) (Lokot, 2021). Each town in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District in the Province of Cotabato will be participated.

#### Research Instrument

The main instrument in a qualitative-phenomenological study is the researcher. She has to develop the interview guide questions, conduct interview, record, and transcribe the gathered data. Hence, it is necessary to prepare the recorder, camera, and pen and paper to capture all the data crucial for the explanation of the phenomenon.

#### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this study. Its key defining features include: data familiarization, coding, theme development, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and reporting (Finlay, 2021). The generation of themes were anchored from the responses of the participants.

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the results of the thematic analysis and the corresponding implications.

### IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents the implications of intercultural language teaching in pedagogical sense and in research.

#### Themes on the challenges do graduate students face during their studies

*Time Management and Scheduling Conflicts.* Time management and scheduling conflicts can significantly hinder graduate students' ability to meet academic demands while fulfilling teaching and personal responsibilities. These challenges often lead to heightened stress, reduced productivity, and in some cases, academic underperformance or burnout. Institutions should recognize these pressures and consider implementing flexible deadlines, asynchronous coursework, or academic load adjustments. Furthermore, targeted workshops on time management and self-regulation may empower students to handle multiple roles more effectively.

Financial assistance, and research support systems to help graduate students manage academic demands alongside professional responsibilities.

*As a graduate student, I face numerous challenges, including schedule. The difficulty of attending graduate school classes when I have daily responsibilities at my own classroom and conducting my research when I have daily work. Next is the difficulty of conducting a study wherein my respondents are also in the work field and they are too busy for an interview or to respond to my questions. And next is of the financial challenges because graduate school is expensive . (KIII Q 1.1)*

Graduate students face multifaceted challenges that require holistic support systems addressing academic, financial, physical, and mental well-being.

*As a graduate students I have a lot of problem such as time management, financial problem, academic pressure, physical problem and mental health problem. (KII 3 Q 1.1)*

There is a pressing need for time management support and institutional flexibility to help graduate students effectively balance professional, academic, and family responsibilities.

*One of the major problems I face is balancing my time between teaching*

*responsibilities, family obligations, and academic requirements. There are days when I feel overwhelmed by lesson planning and grading, then I still need to attend online classes or work on research papers late at night. (KII4 Q 1.1)*

According to Evans et al. (2021), graduate students who juggle professional, academic, and personal responsibilities experience higher levels of stress and burnout due to poor time management. Similarly, research by Storrie and O'Brien (2023) highlights that flexible learning schedules and institutional time management training significantly improve students' academic resilience and life balance. Moreover, Azevedo et al. (2022) argue that without structured support, conflicting schedules can exacerbate mental health issues and prolong program completion times, emphasizing the need for universities to offer more adaptive academic policies.

*Financial Strain.* Financial strain can severely impact a graduate student's academic journey by limiting access to necessary resources such as tuition, books, transportation, and stable housing. This pressure often forces students to juggle multiple jobs or cut back on academic commitments, resulting in lower performance and increased stress. Without adequate financial support, students may delay graduation or drop out entirely. Institutions should consider expanding scholarships, flexible payment plans, and financial literacy programs to alleviate this burden.

Limited transportation, financial strain, and schedule conflicts indicate the need for flexible class formats and logistical support for working graduate students.

*The specific problem I usually face as graduate students are the means of transportation because graduate school is quite far from my house. another one is financial problem and lastly the hard time to attend my classes due to the hectic schedule as teacher. (KIII 5 Q 1.1)*

The combination of financial strain, workload, and mental health stress calls for integrated institutional services that address both academic and personal well-being.

*Here are some specific problems that graduate students often face. Financial strain, time management and workload, mental health and balancing personal life (KII 6 Q 1.1)*

Emotional stress and financial instability highlight the importance of mental health resources and financial assistance for graduate students.

*The specific problems I usually face are emotional and mental stress, financial and time management. (KII 7 Q 1.1)*

Zhang et al. (2021), many graduate students experience financial insecurity, leading to heightened stress, delayed program completion, or even withdrawal from their studies. Li and Flynn (2022) further emphasized that scholarship support and flexible financial aid systems significantly improve persistence and reduce the financial burden on students. Meanwhile, Hayes and Tierney (2023) highlighted that universities must integrate financial literacy education and emergency funding programs to mitigate the adverse effects of financial hardship on student well-being and academic progression.

*Mental and Emotional Health Challenges.* Mental and emotional health challenges can significantly impair a graduate student's academic performance, motivation, and overall well-being. Persistent stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation may lead to burnout, decreased engagement, and, in severe cases, withdrawal from the program. These issues not only affect academic outcomes but also hinder personal and professional development. Institutions should prioritize mental health support by offering counseling services, wellness programs, and fostering a supportive academic environment.

The struggle with time management and academic pressure suggests the need for targeted interventions like flexible deadlines and workload pacing for graduating students.

*Usually problem I face is how to manage my time, because of responsibilities there's a time to struggle. As Graduating student is take a more time to comply important requirements. Also there's a pressure because it is an exciting part of their journey .. (KII 9 Q 1.1)*

Balancing multiple roles while facing financial hardship highlights the urgency for institutions to offer financial aid and support mechanisms that reduce the risk of burnout.

*One of the most significant challenges I usually encounter are the lack of time, as I must juggle a full-time job, coursework, research, and personal responsibilities. This constant demand on my time can lead to burnout and stress, making it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Financial constraints also pose a major issue, as many graduate students struggle to afford tuition, and books. (KII 10 Q 1.1)*

Limited financial support and mental health strain due to family expectations emphasize the importance of counseling services and scholarships to ease external pressures on graduate students.

*The specific problems I usually face are, Poor Financial Support in Continuing Masteral Education, and Poor Mental Health due to high expectations and pressures of my family's relatives (KII 11 Q 1.1)*

Graduate students often face significant mental and emotional health challenges due to academic pressure, social isolation, and uncertainty about the future. A large-scale study by Oswalt et al. (2021) found that over 50% of graduate students reported symptoms of anxiety and depression, with many lacking access to adequate support. Similarly, Capone et al. (2022) emphasized that institutional mental health services, when integrated with peer support networks, lead to better coping and emotional resilience. More recently, Kim and Lee (2024) suggested that promoting self-care, mindfulness, and faculty-student mentorship significantly enhances psychological well-being and reduces dropout risk.

*Overwhelming Workload and Academic Pressure.* An overwhelming workload and intense academic pressure can lead to chronic fatigue, reduced academic performance, and loss of motivation among graduate students. These challenges often interfere with their ability to meet deadlines, engage meaningfully in learning, or maintain a healthy work-life balance. Long-term exposure to such stress may contribute to burnout or withdrawal from the program. Institutions should promote balanced academic expectations and offer workload management support, such as flexible deadlines, mentoring, and skill-building workshops.

The combination of burnout, limited support, and financial strain underscores the need for institutional wellness programs, academic advising, and financial aid initiatives for graduate student-teachers.

*As a teacher enrolled in a graduate school I face different challenges. Such as burnout and stress, time management, limited support, academic pressure, financial strain and a lot more.* (KII 14 Q 1.1)

An overwhelming workload and conflicting schedules call for improved academic flexibility and workload management systems tailored for working graduate students.

*The specific problems I usually face are overwhelming workload, financial and conflict schedule.* (KII 18 Q 1.1)

Common issues like time conflicts, financial burdens, and academic load highlight the importance of structured support services that address graduate students' multifaceted responsibilities.

*As a graduate students common issues include work load, financial strain, conflict schedule and time management* (KII 24 Q 1.1)

Leveque et al. (2021), excessive academic demands contribute to emotional exhaustion, with many students reporting reduced productivity and increased dropout intention. A study by Singh and Hu (2023) found that structured workload distribution and clear academic expectations enhance students' ability to manage pressure and improve learning outcomes. Furthermore, Baloch et al. (2022) emphasized that faculty mentorship and peer collaboration are critical in mitigating academic overload and fostering a healthier educational environment.

*Transportation and Accessibility Issues.* Transportation and accessibility challenges can lead to frequent tardiness, missed classes, and reduced participation in academic activities, especially for students living in remote or underserved areas. These difficulties may increase stress, limit access to learning opportunities, and widen educational inequities. Over time, such barriers can delay academic progress and impact students' overall motivation. Institutions should consider flexible attendance options, hybrid learning formats, and transportation support programs to mitigate these challenges.

The presence of overlapping issues like time management, transportation difficulties, emotional distress, and financial strain signals a need for comprehensive student support that includes logistical, financial, and mental health services.

*As a graduate student . I commonly face several challenge like time management, transportation, emotional problem and financial strain.* (KII 8 Q 1.1)

Challenges in time management and commuting highlight the importance of scheduling flexibility and accessible campus transportation options for graduate students.

*For my experience, lack of time management(school works) and transportation* (KII 17 Q 1.1)

Struggles with transportation, mental health, and identity conflict emphasize the need for inclusive institutional support that promotes well-being and self-efficacy among graduate learners.

*The problems I usually face as graduate studies are transportation, mental problem and role identity problem.* (KII 21 Q 1.1)

Challenges such as long commutes, limited public transit options, and geographic isolation disproportionately affect students from rural or low-income backgrounds, reducing academic engagement and performance (Samuels & Kumar, 2021). Universities that offer hybrid learning models and transportation subsidies show improved retention and student satisfaction (Delgado & Reyes, 2022). Accessibility planning, including campus shuttles, remote access to learning materials, and inclusive infrastructure, supports educational equity and reduces attrition (Nguyen et al., 2024).

*Lack of Institutional and Social Support.* A lack of institutional and social support can leave graduate students feeling isolated, undervalued, and overwhelmed, especially when managing academic and personal demands. Without access to mentoring, academic guidance, and peer networks, students may struggle with motivation, decision-making, and professional development. This gap can contribute to higher dropout rates, decreased research productivity, and limited emotional well-being. Institutions must strengthen their support systems by fostering inclusive communities, enhancing mentorship programs, and providing accessible academic resources.

The issues of lacking institutional support, financial strain, and time management difficulties highlight the urgent need for comprehensive academic advising, expanded financial aid, and time management training for graduate students.

*As a graduate student the usually problems I face are lack of institutional support, financial and time management (KII 23 Q 1.1)*

Graduate students without adequate institutional and social support face heightened risks of academic disengagement, stress, and attrition. Isolation, limited access to mentoring, and weak administrative responsiveness hinder academic performance and professional growth (Garcia & Thomas, 2021). Supportive environments that promote faculty mentorship, peer collaboration, and inclusive academic services foster higher retention and student satisfaction (Velasco et al., 2023). Establishing structured networks of support enhances graduate students' sense of belonging and increases their resilience in navigating complex academic demands (Ali & Navarro, 2022).

Themes on the challenges do graduate students face during their studies

Global Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme
Navigating Graduate Studies Amidst the Pressures of Time, Finances, Workload, and Well-being	Time Management and Scheduling Conflicts	Students struggle to balance academic responsibilities with teaching work, family obligations, and personal life. Constant schedule conflicts and lack of sufficient time lead to stress and difficulty meeting deadlines.
	Financial Strain	Graduate students face difficulties affording tuition, transportation, books, and living expenses, which add considerable stress to their studies.
	Mental and Emotional Health Challenges	High expectations, academic pressure, emotional exhaustion, mental fatigue, and poor mental health are common experiences among graduate students, sometimes exacerbated by family pressures.
	Overwhelming Workload and Academic Pressure	Students often report being overwhelmed by coursework, teaching loads, research requirements, and academic expectations, which heighten stress and burnout.
	Transportation and Accessibility Issues	Distance to graduate schools and lack of reliable transportation create additional barriers to attending classes and completing academic tasks.
	Lack of Institutional and Social Support	Some students feel that their graduate institutions provide inadequate support systems, further complicating their academic journey.

#### Themes on the teaching responses to the challenges they faced during their graduate studies

*Effective Time Management and Planning.* Effective time management and structured planning help graduate students reduce stress, increase productivity, and maintain a better work-life balance. By setting clear priorities and allocating time blocks for academic, teaching, and personal responsibilities, students can avoid last-minute overload and burnout. These strategies also foster a sense of control and confidence, allowing them to meet deadlines and maintain academic performance even amidst competing demands. Ultimately, integrating these practices cultivates long-term professional habits essential for both academic and career success.

The response highlights the importance of proactive financial planning and resourcefulness in managing both academic and economic challenges during graduate studies.

*To succeed in graduate school, plan the time well, focus on studies and finding ways to manage the expenses looking for good remedy in financial strain, bank loans and do not afraid to ask help (KII 2 Q 2.1)*

This reflects the value of structured time management and boundary-setting, emphasizing that seeking help is a strategic tool for academic survival and mental well-being.

*I started to create a strict weekly schedule and set clear priorities. I also learned to say no to additional responsibilities that were not urgent. Most importantly, I learned to ask for help—from colleagues, mentors, and even my family. (KII 4 Q 2.1)*

The statement implies that applying time management strategies enhances productivity and enables graduate students to better balance dual roles as educators and learners.

*As a graduate student facing challenges of balancing teaching responsibilities and academic demands, by implementing these strategies like effective time management to be more productive. (KII 8 Q 2.1)*

Effective time management and planning are crucial strategies for graduate students balancing academic, professional, and personal responsibilities. Recent studies highlight that structured planning tools, such as weekly scheduling, goal-setting, and prioritization frameworks, significantly reduce stress and enhance productivity among graduate learners (Zhou & Zhang, 2022). When students adopt clear timelines and manage competing demands through effective planning, they are better able to complete tasks efficiently and maintain mental well-being (Rogerson-Revell et al., 2021). Moreover, integrating time management training into graduate programs has been shown to improve academic self-efficacy and reduce the likelihood of burnout (Khanal & Mishra, 2023).

*Seeking Support from Family, Colleagues, and Mentors.* Seeking support from family, colleagues, and mentors plays a crucial role in helping graduate students navigate academic, professional, and personal challenges. These support systems provide emotional reassurance, practical assistance, and guidance, which can reduce stress and enhance coping capacity. Colleagues and mentors, in particular, offer academic expertise and encouragement that build confidence and clarity in decision-making. Such networks not only improve graduate students' academic persistence but also promote overall well-being and work-life balance.

This shows that self-belief and peer communication play a critical role in reducing stress and enhancing perseverance during graduate studies.

*I overcome these challenges by believing myself that I can reach my goal and allow myself to open up my problems to my colleagues through this it lessen my burden. (KII 3 Q 2.1)*

The statement underscores the value of seeking support from personal networks to alleviate the emotional and logistical pressures of academic life.

*To overcome this challenges I ask help to my relatives, friends and family. (KII 5 Q 2.1)*

It implies that implementing time management strategies is essential for maintaining productivity while juggling teaching and graduate-level responsibilities.

*As a graduate student facing challenges of balancing teaching responsibilities and academic demands, by implementing these strategies like effective time management to be more productive. (KII 8 Q 2.1)*

Support from family, colleagues, and mentors significantly contributes to graduate students' academic success and emotional resilience. Recent studies highlight that mentorship enhances academic performance, reduces anxiety, and fosters a sense of academic belonging (Nguyen et al., 2021). Family and peer encouragement also serve as protective factors against burnout, helping students sustain motivation and persist through academic hardships (Park & Lee, 2023). When graduate students receive regular encouragement and practical help—such as workload sharing or research guidance—they demonstrate greater perseverance and well-being throughout their studies (Santos et al., 2024).

*Building Personal Resilience and Maintaining a Positive Mindset.* Seeking support from family, colleagues, and mentors allows graduate students to manage academic demands while maintaining emotional stability and motivation. These support systems offer practical assistance such as workload sharing and academic guidance, which help ease the pressure of juggling teaching and studies. Emotional reassurance from loved ones can buffer stress and prevent burnout, while mentor feedback provides direction and academic clarity. Such networks enhance resilience, promote persistence, and foster a collaborative culture essential for graduate school success.

This highlights the importance of goal orientation and future-focused motivation in helping graduate students endure present challenges.

*In order to survive the struggles I focus on my long term goals and I remind myself that this intense period is only temporary. Once I'm done with graduate school, I will have a better qualification at work and I can spend weekends with my family. (KII 1 Q 2.1)*

The statement suggests that incorporating self-care and resilience-building activities can effectively mitigate stress and support sustained academic engagement.

*Prioritizing self care , engaging to the activities that promote well being suchas exercise, hobbies and relaxation techniques . Builinding resilience to develop coping mechanisms stress and adversity. (KII 6 Q 2.1)*

Embracing a positive mindset and prioritizing professional development can empower students to turn challenges into opportunities for growth.

*To overcome these challenges I am Thinking positive and finding solution for every challenges is the best way. I embracing a growth mindset and seeking ongoing proffesional development can enhance my teaching skills and knowledge (KII 9 Q 2.1)*

Research shows that resilient students are more likely to persist through setbacks, manage emotional fatigue, and adapt effectively to complex learning demands (Yilmaz & Sahin, 2022). Positive thinking, when coupled with self-efficacy, enhances graduate students' sense of purpose and reduces the

psychological toll of academic pressure (Lozano-Díaz et al., 2021). Furthermore, resilience training and reflective practices have been shown to bolster emotional regulation, improve mental health, and promote academic success among graduate learners (Chen et al., 2023).

*Practicing Self-Care and Stress Management.* Practicing self-care and stress management helps graduate students preserve their mental and physical health amidst the intense demands of teaching and academic work. Allocating time for rest, hobbies, and mindfulness reduces burnout and boosts focus and emotional regulation. These strategies improve coping mechanisms, enhance productivity, and sustain motivation over long periods. Integrating self-care into daily routines fosters a balanced lifestyle, which is essential for long-term success and well-being in graduate education.

Emphasizing self-care and resilience-building strategies supports graduate students in managing stress and sustaining productivity throughout their studies.

*Prioritizing self care , engaging to the activities that promote well being suchas exercise, hobbies and relaxation techniques . Builinding resilience to develop coping mechanisms stress and adversitry.* (KII 6 Q 2.1)

Balancing academic responsibilities with intentional self-care and time management enhances well-being and helps prevent burnout among graduate students.

*I prioritized task sought help from professor and colleagues, and utilized time management techniques.I also nade sure to schedule in some time for self care.* (KII 12 Q 2.1)

Incorporating goal-setting, self-care, and a proactive support-seeking mindset can help graduate students remain resilient and motivated despite academic and personal demands.

*I try to manage challenges by staying organized, planning ahead, and asking for support from people I trust. I also motivate myself by focusing on my goals and reminding myself why I started this journey. Sometimes, taking breaks and practicing self-care also helps me reset and continue.* (KII 15 Q 2.1)

Studies have shown that mindfulness practices, adequate sleep, physical activity, and intentional breaks help reduce stress and prevent burnout among students managing dual roles (Lee et al., 2021). Moreover, developing structured routines and engaging in hobbies or support groups enhances emotional balance and coping mechanisms (Ramirez & Scott, 2023). Institutions that promote self-care awareness and mental health resources create a more resilient and productive academic environment for their graduate learners (Tan & Mahmud, 2022).

### **Themes on the teaching responses to the challenges they faced during their graduate studie**

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Global Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme
Strategic Planning, Resilience, and Support-Seeking as Core Responses to Graduate Student Challenges	Effective Time Management and Planning	Students use structured schedules, digital calendars, prioritization of tasks, early completion of work, and breaking big tasks into smaller parts to manage competing demands efficiently.
	Seeking Support from Family, Colleagues, and Mentors	Many emphasize reaching out to professors, peers, family, and even external mentors (such as alumni and professional organizations) to gain emotional, academic, and logistical support.
	Building Personal Resilience and Maintaining a Positive Mindset	Overcoming challenges involves cultivating resilience, adopting a growth mindset, embracing positive thinking, engaging in self-reflection, and focusing on long-term goals to stay motivated.
	Practicing Self-Care and Stress Management	Students recognize the importance of self-care practices such as exercise, hobbies, relaxation techniques, and taking breaks to reduce burnout and maintain mental health.

### **Themes on the lessons take by the graduate students for their future professional development**

*Importance of Time Management and Planning.* Mastering time management equips future professionals with the ability to balance multiple responsibilities and meet deadlines efficiently. It cultivates discipline, reduces stress, and improves productivity, which are vital in both academic and professional settings. Planning enhances decision-making skills and fosters accountability in achieving long-term goals.

Planning and strategizing one's schedule in advance helps aspiring graduate students manage their academic load alongside teaching responsibilities, minimizing stress and improving productivity.

For aspiring graduate school students, what I can advice is that you have to plan your schedule, strategize. (KII 1 Q 3.1)

Recognizing the value of self-discipline and a strong support system enables graduate students to maintain balance and avoid burnout during periods of high demand.

Recognizing the importance of time management, self-discipline, and seeking support equips aspiring graduate students to balance the dual responsibilities of teaching and studying effectively.

Emphasizing time management, boundaries, and self-care fosters resilience and prevents graduate students from becoming overwhelmed by conflicting personal and academic commitments.

They should learn the importance of time management, setting boundaries, and self-care. (KII 4 Q 3.1)

Understanding the complex realities of graduate school prepares students to navigate academic and life challenges proactively, supporting sustained motivation and well-being.

Acknowledge the multi face led challenges, understand that graduate school is not just about academics. It involves financial pressure, time management, struggles, research hurdles, mental health consideration and career uncertainties. Being aware of these potential difficulties beforehand can help them prepare proactively. (KII 6 Q 3.1)

Effective time management remains a critical skill for graduate students navigating the dual demands of professional teaching and academic study. Structured planning promotes academic success, reduces stress, and enables efficient task prioritization. Research emphasizes the positive correlation between time management and academic performance, especially when students use goal-setting, weekly planning, and time-blocking techniques (Ahmad et al., 2022). These habits not only enhance productivity during graduate school but also prepare students for the demands of leadership roles in education.

Cultivating Resilience, Perseverance, and Adaptability. Resilience allows graduate students to overcome setbacks and continue progressing despite challenges. Perseverance builds mental fortitude essential for sustained academic and career growth. Adaptability enables professionals to respond constructively to changing environments, a crucial trait in dynamic work settings.

Understanding the multifaceted challenges of graduate school fosters proactive preparation, resilience, and a realistic approach to managing academic, financial, and personal demands.

Acknowledge the multi face led challenges, understand that graduate school is not just about academics. It involves financial pressure, time management, struggles, research hurdles, mental health consideration and career uncertainties. Being aware of these potential difficulties beforehand can help them prepare proactively. (KIII 6 Q 3.1)

Recognizing the importance of time management, self-discipline, and seeking support equips aspiring graduate students to balance the dual responsibilities of teaching and studying effectively.

To the aspiring student they should learn that pursuing further education while teaching is challenging but deeply rewarding. For my experience, they should understand the value of time management, self-discipline and asking support when needed (KII 7 Q 3.1)

Cultivating openness to change, gratitude, and a positive mindset empowers future educators to navigate challenges with resilience and foster a more empathetic and growth-oriented teaching practice.

I learn to listen and open minded to change and embracing new experience that help me to navigate life's challenges and opportunities. Become gratitude also is help me to appreciate the things in my life and fosters a positive mindset . Every experience there's a story .either a good or bad, Being an educator, I always look in positive or in good side because I know it can affect to become a good teacher. (KII 9 Q 3.1)

Graduate students who demonstrate resilience are more likely to persist despite academic setbacks, personal obligations, or emotional burnout. Adaptability enables them to shift strategies and approaches amid changing workloads or personal crises. Studies show that building psychological resilience significantly improves coping capacity and academic persistence (Harrison & Shapiro, 2023). These traits are indispensable for educators managing classroom challenges and institutional reforms.

*Seeking Support Systems and Building Networks.* Engaging with mentors, colleagues, and family promotes emotional stability and motivation throughout academic and professional pursuits. Networking offers access to opportunities, resources, and collaborations that support career advancement. Support systems also provide practical assistance that alleviates personal and academic burdens.

Emphasizing time management, effective communication, and self-care equips aspiring students to better handle the academic and personal demands of graduate studies.

*Aspiring students should learn the importance of time management, effective communication with professors and colleagues, and self care.* (KII 12 Q 3.1)

Developing strong organizational skills, cultivating a supportive network, and prioritizing personal well-being are critical strategies for success in graduate education.

*Aspiring graduate students should develop strong time management skills, build a supportive network, and learn to prioritize self-care.* (KII 16 Q 3.1)

Building peer networks enhances students' social skills and provides crucial emotional and academic support during unpredictable challenges.

*They should join peer groups increase their social skills. Colleagues will help me in an unpredictable time and ways (KII 24 Q 3.1)*

Building strong support networks with mentors, colleagues, and peers provides emotional, academic, and logistical assistance to graduate students. Peer networks and mentorship are shown to reduce isolation, increase motivation, and improve thesis completion rates (Chen et al., 2021). Collaborative relationships also serve as a foundation for future professional partnerships in education, research, and policy-making.

*Prioritizing Self-Care and Well-Being.* Prioritizing health fosters sustainable performance and prevents burnout during demanding periods of graduate study and professional life. Incorporating wellness routines enhances mental clarity and emotional resilience. It reflects a balanced approach that values personal well-being alongside achievement.

Managing time effectively is essential for aspiring graduate students to prevent burnout and maintain consistent academic performance.

*To the aspiring graduate students avoid burnout by managing your time. (KII 18 Q 3.1)*

Engaging in peer groups helps graduate students enhance their social skills and provides critical support during unexpected challenges.

*They should join peer groups increase their social skills. Colleagues will help me in an unpredictable time and ways (KII 24 Q 3.1)*

Graduate students who prioritize their physical and mental well-being are more resilient and less prone to burnout. Engagement in wellness routines such as mindfulness, regular rest, and emotional check-ins is linked to improved cognitive performance and emotional regulation (Miller & Russell, 2020). Long-term, these habits contribute to sustainable teaching careers where educators model and advocate for wellness in the classroom.

*Embracing Lifelong Learning and Growth Mindset.* A growth mindset encourages continuous improvement and a positive attitude toward learning new skills and knowledge. Lifelong learning supports relevance and innovation in professional practice. This mindset instills openness to feedback and change, which is essential for leadership and advancement.

Developing perseverance and adaptability enables aspiring graduate students to enhance both their academic resilience and their effectiveness as empathetic, reflective educators.

*They should understand that perseverance and adaptability are just as important as intelligence. My experience taught me that teaching and learning can go hand-in-hand. The more I grow as a student, the more empathy and insight I gain as a teacher.. (KII 20 Q 3.1)*

Graduate study nurtures the habit of continuous learning, critical reflection, and intellectual curiosity. A growth mindset encourages students to view challenges as opportunities for development, enhancing their pedagogical flexibility and innovation. Lifelong learning among educators is directly associated with improved student outcomes and instructional adaptability (Nguyen & Taylor, 2024).

Themes on the lessons take by the graduate students for their future professional development

Global Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme
Building Resilience, Practical Skills, and Growth Mindset for Graduate School Success and Beyond	Importance of Time Management and Planning	Students emphasize the need to develop strong time management skills, structured planning, setting realistic goals, and balancing responsibilities to prevent burnout and ensure academic success.
	Cultivating Resilience, Perseverance, and Adaptability	Graduate study demands resilience, patience, adaptability, and a strong work ethic to face academic and personal challenges with determination and flexibility.
	Seeking Support Systems and Building Networks	Having support from colleagues, professors, family, and peer groups is seen as essential for emotional resilience, academic guidance, and motivation throughout the journey.
	Prioritizing Self-Care and Well-Being	Maintaining physical and mental health through proper self-care, rest, and boundary-setting is crucial to sustaining energy and motivation during graduate studies.
	Embracing Lifelong Learning and Growth Mindset	Graduate school nurtures a growth mindset, continuous professional development, adaptability to

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change, and appreciation for lifelong learning as central values for future educators.

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### **Themes on the support system need by the graduate students as they balance teaching and studies**

*Collegial and Peer Support.* Having a strong collegial and peer support system allows graduate students to share workloads, exchange best practices, and receive moral encouragement during periods of academic and professional stress. Collaborative networks within the teaching community foster resilience and help alleviate feelings of isolation. Effective peer support also enhances problem-solving skills and promotes a culture of shared success.

Support from colleagues and family empowers graduate students to manage both academic and personal responsibilities without compromising either.

*My colleagues are very supportive. So when I have to leave school for graduate school studies or to conduct my research or to do follow up on my research, my colleagues take over my class for the day. And I also ask them advice about my graduate school studies. Loved ones, they are very supportive. My children, I explain to them that I am doing this to give them a better future and to pursue career advancement. They understand as long as I still have time to spend with them, talk to them or teach them with their assignments. My family is rooting for my success, because my success is also theirs.* (KII 1 Q 4.1)

Collegial motivation plays a key role in helping graduate students not only endure but also thrive in their educational journey.

*Teacher/ colleagues kept me grounded and motivated. These strategies didn't just help me survive graduate school; they helped me grow through it.* (KII 3 Q 4.1)

A strong and responsive support system consisting of colleagues, professors, and family significantly enhances a graduate student's ability to meet academic demands while fulfilling teaching duties.

*I am very fortunate to have a strong support system. My colleagues at school are understanding and often offer to help when they know I have deadlines. My professors are approachable and flexible, especially when I explain my situation as a working teacher. Most importantly, my family gives me emotional encouragement and helps with household responsibilities when I need time to study or attend classes.*

(KII 4 Q 4.1)

Peer and collegial support plays a crucial role in alleviating stress and promoting academic resilience among graduate students who juggle teaching and studying. Collaborative environments help reduce feelings of isolation and foster shared strategies for managing overlapping responsibilities. Peer feedback, emotional reassurance, and practical collaboration help graduate students stay motivated and academically engaged. This form of support enhances a sense of community and boosts persistence in graduate programs (Castro & Collins, 2021; Suh & Mah, 2023).

*Academic Guidance and Mentorship from Professors.* Access to mentorship and academic guidance from professors provides crucial direction in managing coursework and research responsibilities. Mentors not only offer technical advice but also emotional support and encouragement that boosts students' academic confidence. Such guidance ensures that students stay focused, avoid major academic pitfalls, and develop professional competencies.

Receiving professional, academic, and emotional support from colleagues, mentors, and family enables graduate students to navigate the complexities of academic work more effectively.

*I receive supports from my colleagues like professional advice, share their expertise from our adviser in research, her support by giving guidance, mentor support and also from our family providing emotional support* (KII 2 Q 4.1)

A collaborative support system involving colleagues, professors, and loved ones contributes to managing academic tasks and personal stability during graduate studies.

*The support I received from my colleagues is brainstorming session while from my professor is helping me with my research design and from my loved ones helps me with living arrangements.* (KII 5 Q 4.1)

The combination of peer collaboration, academic mentorship, and personal support forms a comprehensive network that enhances resilience and productivity among graduate students.

*Colleague's peer support through study groups shared experiences emotional encouragement and collaboration on projects. Professors academic guidance, mentorships, research support, networking opportunities, and constructive feedbacks. Love ones emotional support, encouragement, understanding, and practical help with personal life matters.* (KII 6 Q 4.1)

Faculty mentorship contributes significantly to graduate student success by offering expert guidance, academic modeling, and research direction. Mentors serve as both academic and professional role models, helping students navigate the complexities of graduate work while managing teaching duties. Effective mentorship improves research productivity, time management, and confidence, and is often linked to higher retention and graduation rates (Hughes et al., 2022; Serrano & Lim, 2024).

*Family and Loved Ones' Emotional and Practical Support.* The emotional and practical support from family and loved ones plays a critical role in maintaining graduate students' mental health and sustaining their motivation. Assistance with household tasks, emotional reassurance, and flexible family

expectations can significantly reduce stress. A stable support system at home empowers students to balance their personal, academic, and teaching duties more effectively.

Academic mentorship and emotional support from loved ones play a vital role in sustaining graduate students' mental and physical well-being.

*Learning from every professor is helpful to become who i am today. Support from my loved one is very helpful to maintain and balance my mental and physical well-being. (KII 8 Q 4.1)*

Emotional encouragement and financial support from one's network alleviate stress and enable students to remain focused on academic responsibilities.

*The support I received from family, friends, and colleagues gave me the emotional strength to keep going. Just knowing I wasn't alone and that others believed in me was incredibly motivating. Financial assistance, whether through scholarships or careful budgeting, eased one of the biggest burdens and allowed me to focus more on my studies rather than constantly worrying about expenses. (KII 10 Q 4.1)*

Strong familial support serves as a critical pillar in helping graduate students manage the dual demands of education and personal life.

*Strong Family support from Parents, Siblings, and an understanding relatives. (KII 11 Q 4.1)*

The emotional and logistical support provided by family members and close relationships is a cornerstone of success for many graduate students. Emotional reassurance helps buffer the psychological stress of managing multiple roles, while practical assistance—such as help with household responsibilities—frees up time for academic tasks. Strong familial support networks are positively associated with lower burnout and greater satisfaction in graduate school (Fong et al., 2023; de la Peña & Rivera, 2021).

*Financial Support and Assistance.* Financial support, whether from scholarships, family, or institutional aid, alleviates one of the most significant burdens faced by graduate students. Reducing financial pressure enables students to concentrate more fully on their academic and teaching responsibilities. Financial stability also promotes mental well-being, minimizes dropout rates, and increases the likelihood of academic success.

Graduate students benefit significantly from a layered support system encompassing institutional flexibility, family encouragement, financial planning, and access to mental health resources.

*I think to have a successful balance with the responsibility in a graduate school and teaching, a teacher should have a multi layered system. One is from the institution he/she belongs, which he/she can get the understanding and support to go a long. Next is the family support, no other people can give us a high support but the people inside our home they witness the struggle and they're the one can give you more reason to boost one's morale. Another is the financial support, financial can be an issue sometimes it's important to keep track on your expenses and always give percent for your graduate studies a to lessen the burden. And lastly, mental health resources, it is important that a teacher can manage the pressure and burnout he/she faces during the graduate school. Always look at yourself and prioritize your mental health. (KII 14 Q 4.1)*

The combined academic support from colleagues and professors, along with practical assistance from loved ones, strengthens a student's ability to manage graduate demands.

*The support that my colleagues giving are Understanding the unique stress of grad school, offering encouragement during tough times anf helping me in research. My professon pusing me in my academics and love ones support me by helping with chores, and finances. (KII 18 Q 4.1)*

Shared expertise, academic mentorship, and financial help from close networks contribute meaningfully to graduate student resilience and academic success.

*My colleagues shared their experiences and experties, my professor provide academic guidance and my love ones help me in my financial. (KII 22 Q 4.1)*

Financial constraints remain one of the top barriers to graduate student success, especially for those balancing employment and education. Access to scholarships, grants, stipends, or family financial help reduces economic pressure and allows students to focus more effectively on their academic and teaching responsibilities. Without such support, students often experience increased stress, delayed academic progress, or even program attrition (Nguyen & Taylor, 2024; Ahmad & Li, 2022).

Themes on the support system need by the graduate students as they balance teaching and studies

Global Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme
The Critical Role of Collegial, Academic, and Family Support Systems in Sustaining Graduate Student Success	Collegial and Peer Support	Colleagues provide emotional encouragement, assistance with school responsibilities (lesson planning, class coverage, paperwork), peer discussions, motivation, and a sense of belonging during graduate studies.
	Academic Guidance and Mentorship from Professors	Professors and academic mentors offer research guidance, flexible deadlines, professional

	development support, critical feedback, and mentorship that help students manage academic pressures.
Family and Loved Ones' Emotional and Practical Support	Families and loved ones provide emotional encouragement, financial assistance, help with household responsibilities, and mental health support to ensure students can focus on both work and study.
Financial Support and Assistance	Support includes scholarships, budgeting help, and direct financial assistance from family members to ease the financial burdens of graduate education.

### Themes on managing the competing the demands of graduate studies, teaching, and personal lives

*Strategic Time Management and Prioritization.* Graduate students who strategically manage their time are more likely to achieve academic goals without compromising their teaching and personal responsibilities. Effective time-blocking, goal-setting, and prioritization can reduce stress and improve overall productivity. Time management tools such as digital calendars and task organizers foster discipline and enhance balance. Proactive planning allows students to maintain control over workloads and meet deadlines consistently.

Focusing on high-impact tasks, time blocking, and prioritizing self-care empowers graduate students to manage overlapping responsibilities with greater clarity and balance.

*To balance my graduate studies, Teaching and personal life, I focused on high-impact task, schedule dedicated time blocks, organize with to-do-list and prioritize self-care, flexibility is a key (KII 2 Q 5.1)*

Intentional planning and time management enable students to navigate the simultaneous demands of teaching and studying without feeling overwhelmed.

*Balancing responsibilities as graduate students teaching and personal lives requires intentional planning. Time-management is the best way to handle these. Setting goals and planning is effective to ensure smooth flow of responsibilities. (KII 3 Q 5.1)*

Establishing structured goals and routines helps graduate students stay organized and maintain control over academic, professional, and personal tasks.

*Balancing responsibilities as graduate students, teaching personal life requires intentional planning, time management is the best strategy to handle this also setting goals and planning is effective. (KII 4 Q 5.1)*

Recent studies emphasize that strategic time management leads to academic success and mitigates burnout among student-teachers (Nguyen et al., 2022). Research by Kim and Park (2023) suggests that prioritization skills are critical for navigating overlapping deadlines in graduate programs. Furthermore, Yeung et al. (2021) highlight the value of structured routines in supporting work–study–life integration.

*Emphasis on Self-Care, Flexibility, and Resilience.* Building resilience and practicing self-care are essential for graduate students handling heavy workloads. Flexible schedules, stress-management techniques, and emotional regulation help reduce burnout and maintain well-being. Resilient students are more adaptable to change and are better prepared to handle unexpected academic or personal setbacks. Investing in mental health practices boosts productivity and fosters long-term success.

Embracing self-compassion and flexibility helps graduate students stay grounded and avoid frustration when plans do not unfold as expected.

*The strategy I use to prioritize my time and responsibilities between graduate studies and personal commitment is the dedication to my work and practicing self-compassion and believe that not everything goes with my plan (KII 5 Q 5.1)*

Mindfulness and intentional self-care practices are vital in managing academic responsibilities while preserving mental and physical well-being.

*The mindfulness and focus when working on specific task try to minimize distractions and focus fully on the present moment to improve efficiency and the quality of your work. Prioritizing self-care, schedule time for rest, exercise, and activities you enjoy. Taking care of your physical and mental well-being is crucial for sustain productivity and preventing burnout (KII 6 Q 5.1)*

Making thoughtful decisions and returning to simple, manageable actions can ease the pressure of balancing daily graduate and personal responsibilities.

*I think having a good understanding, focusing in present situations and making good decisions together with my family of my day-to-day responsibilities. And going back to basic steps one at a time to cope with the demand in my everyday life. (KII 11 Q 5.1)*

Research by Suri and Martin (2022) shows that students who incorporate self-care practices maintain higher academic motivation and lower levels of psychological distress. A study by Tanaka et al. (2021) found that emotional flexibility and resilience significantly predicted graduate student persistence. Moreover, Singh et al. (2024) emphasized the positive impact of wellness routines on academic resilience during periods of high stress.

**Seeking and Utilizing Support Systems.** Graduate students benefit significantly from academic, emotional, and financial support systems. Collegial collaboration fosters motivation and shared problem-solving. Mentorship from professors enhances academic competence, while support from family contributes to emotional stability and household responsibilities. Financial assistance relieves a major burden, allowing students to focus more on learning than survival.

Having a strong support system at home helps graduate students better manage academic demands by reducing personal and household burdens.

*I also learned heavily on my support system. My family and close friends were incredibly understanding and helped with household responsibilities, which gave me the space to focus on my studies (KII 19 Q 5.1)*

Open communication with workplace leaders fosters understanding and flexibility, which is crucial for balancing teaching responsibilities and graduate school demands.

*At work, I communicated openly with my principal and colleagues about my academic commitments. This led to some flexibility in my schedule and even emotional support from coworkers who had been through similar experiences.*

(KII 20 Q 5.)

A study by Ramirez and Thomas (2023) found that peer and mentor support positively influenced graduate student retention. Choi and Hernandez (2021) revealed that institutional mentorship enhances academic satisfaction and emotional coping. Additionally, Zhang et al. (2022) demonstrated the buffering effect of familial and financial support on stress levels among teacher-graduate students.

Themes on managing the competing the demands of graduate studies, teaching, and personal lives

Global Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme
Intentional Management of Responsibilities through Planning, Self-Care, and Support Systems in Graduate Studies	Strategic Time Management and Prioritization	Students emphasized the use of time-blocking, detailed weekly schedules, planners, setting clear goals, breaking down tasks, and prioritizing urgent activities to handle overlapping demands between graduate studies, teaching, and personal life.
	Emphasis on Self-Care, Flexibility, and Resilience	Students highlighted the importance of practicing self-compassion, mindfulness, scheduling rest, hobbies, maintaining physical and mental well-being, and staying flexible when things do not go according to plan.
	Seeking and Utilizing Support Systems	Asking for help from family, friends, and colleagues, receiving emotional and practical support, and communicating openly at work allowed students to create manageable solutions for balancing their multiple responsibilities.

### Implications for Practice

The findings underscore the urgent need for institutions to implement flexible academic structures that accommodate the dual roles of teacher-students. Schools offering graduate programs should consider providing modular scheduling, hybrid or asynchronous learning options, and designated academic leave policies to ease time and workload pressures. Such flexibility can help prevent academic fatigue and promote better work-life balance, especially for teachers with caregiving responsibilities.

In addition to schedule adjustments, there must be targeted financial assistance for graduate students who are full-time educators. Scholarships, installment payment plans, and research grants can reduce the burden of educational expenses that currently force many to prioritize financial survival over academic continuity. Institutions should also explore partnerships with local education departments or NGOs to expand financial aid tailored to teacher-learners, particularly those in economically strained contexts.

Lastly, institutions must enhance mental health support systems for graduate students. Counseling services, peer support programs, and resilience-building workshops should be made accessible and stigma-free. Faculty and program heads must also be trained to recognize mental and emotional stress among

students and respond with empathy and academic accommodations. Creating a culture of wellness and institutional care is crucial in retaining and empowering teacher-learners in their academic journey.

### Implications for Future Research

Future research should focus on the impact of interactive and engaging learning strategies on students' cultural awareness. Investigating how diverse teaching methods help students connect with Filipino language and culture is important. This could provide valuable insights into creating more effective language teaching models.

Exploring how cultural context affects language learning is another key area for research. Studying how students relate their own cultural experiences to Filipino language use will offer a deeper understanding. This research can guide educators in incorporating relevant cultural aspects into their teaching.

Research should also examine the role of teachers as facilitators in promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusion. Understanding how teachers navigate cultural diversity in the classroom will help improve teaching practices. This will ensure that language learning is both meaningful and respectful of all cultures.

### Concluding Remarks

This study highlights the complex realities faced by graduate students who are also full-time educators. Their experiences are shaped by conflicting responsibilities, financial burdens, emotional strain, and the lack of institutional recognition. Despite these challenges, they exhibit resilience and commitment to professional growth. However, the demands placed upon them often exceed what current academic structures and supports can accommodate. These findings call for systemic reform in graduate education, with emphasis on flexible, inclusive, and supportive frameworks that affirm the diverse identities of working learners. Addressing these issues is not only a matter of equity but also of educational sustainability, ensuring that teacher-learners are equipped, empowered, and supported throughout their academic and professional pursuits.

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