



Teachers' Stress in The In-Person Learning Modality

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Abstract:

The indefinite suspension of classes and the subsequent shift to online learning was a great challenge for teachers, and the new order to return to face-to-face was another challenge because, at that time, the pandemic had not been fully cleared yet. In this premise, this study analyzed the stress level of teachers in implementing face-to-face classes in 2023. Data needed for this descriptive paper was collected from 124 public elementary school teachers using a self-made instrument that has passed the rigorous tests of validity and reliability. The ensuing analysis revealed teachers' low stress level in the in-person learning modality, specifically in work-related stress ($M=2.4537$; $SD=0.35302$) and personal and social stress ($M=2.2262$; $SD=0.51914$). Furthermore, a significant difference was found in the level of stress of teachers in the in-person learning modality when grouped by demographics. The study results call for the implementation of PTEM (Promoting Teachers' Efficiency in Meeting Deadlines) and financial education in Budgeting 101 for Teachers to reduce to the minimum the teachers' stress level.

Keywords: Stress, teachers, in-person learning modality, face-to-face classes, work-related stress, personal and family stress, social stress

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

The Department of Education has ordered the mandatory return of students to face-to-face classes starting November 2, 2022, barring any major disruption such as the arrival of a typhoon or any other natural calamity as stipulated in Department Order No. 34, series of 2022. The decision to switch to online instruction after classes were suspended indefinitely was a significant problem for educators, and the announcement that lessons would now resume in person presented another difficulty as the pandemic had not yet completely subsided.

Following the restoration of in-person instruction, it has been noted that certain teachers cannot fully support their students and the school at large during these sessions. For instance, some parents don't care about what their kids need in school, while others don't even care about the teachers' evaluation feedback or their requests for a homeroom meeting. Studies have shown that, despite the assertion of a successful transition, educators have experienced unavoidable pressures because of the change. Villar (2022) asserts that stress is a natural byproduct of change. Numerous pressures surfaced during the transition.

The researcher is interested in understanding the natural sources of stress among teachers and how all these factors affect them at work. With a vast adjustment from face-to-face to the new standard and back to face-to-face, instructional changes must have stressed many teachers. Also, as an active school partner and parent, the researcher observed that the adjustments made by teachers from the old normal to the new normal and back to face-to-face learning again were challenging tasks to do. One of the biggest sources of stress is dealing with kids who, after two years of at-home instruction, still can't write, read, or count correctly. A lot of pupils need to catch up in school. These pressures and other variables inspired the researcher to carry out this investigation.

Current State of Knowledge

Numerous studies indicate that stress, despair, and anxiety are among the mental health issues that many teachers worldwide may be experiencing. For instance, the sixth wave of the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), which gathered information from a variety of European occupations, showed that while professionals in the teaching field reported higher levels of job satisfaction than other professionals, they also reported higher levels of stress, anxiety, exhaustion, and difficulty sleeping. The results of a study on the mental health of secondary school teachers in Hong Kong showed that 12.3% of teachers had the highest level of depression, and 30.3% had the highest level of anxiety. No matter the proportion, instructors' poor teaching effectiveness is significantly impacted by their high levels of anxiety and despair (Leung, 2019).



In the Philippines, Teachers' stress levels and mental health are two key factors that enable them to manage their classrooms holistically and lead by example. Teachers are the front-line employees when it comes to providing the learners with the Department of Education's (DepEd) curriculum, services, and skill mastery. The delivery of education must continue even though schools are not yet prepared to use distance learning (Asio & Bayucca, 2021). In order to be well-prepared for school-related activities, become proficient teachers, and develop into all-around learners, they participate in workshops and training sessions and receive technical support from mentors and specialists.

Teachers' intrinsic qualities in 21st-century teaching are shaped by their professional and personal contexts. The state must take into account their physical, mental, social, and psychological well-being before placing them on the front lines of the educational system, and educators must make sure they possess the technical competence, knowledge, and cognitive perspective needed to serve students with varying needs (Jimenez, 2021).

According to Bongco (2019), teachers experience high stress levels due to their workload. Concerns about teachers being overworked have been voiced by teacher groups. The Teachers' Dignity Coalition (TDC) and the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) Philippines made different demands of the Department of Education, urging it to examine teachers' workloads to ensure their physical and mental well-being. Furthermore, ACT claimed that since rules requiring much work were implemented and "those that secure ample rest were not implemented," the workload for teachers had grown increasingly onerous and draining over time (Hernando-Malipot, 2018). Additionally, it takes more work for a rookie in the field to keep up with the expectations of teaching. Providing starting teachers with the necessary support during their transition into "competent professionals" is crucial. With efficient teaching strategies targeted at student achievement, instructors are given capacity-building exercises to help them meet the demands of their job.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (TTSC), created by Richards Lazarus in 1966, served as the foundation for the study. It views stress as the outcome of a transaction between an individual and their complex environment, encompassing multiple cognitive, physiological, affective, psychological, and neurological systems.

The cognitive model, known as the transactional model of stress and coping, views stress and coping as a process that is dependent on shifting cognitive assessments. In his research, Lazarus created the initial iteration of the transactional model of stress and coping during the 1950s and 60s. He then published his findings in his 1966 book *Psychological Stress and the Coping Process*, after extensive study conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. In his research, Lazarus created the initial iteration of the transactional model of stress and coping during the 1950s and 60s. He then published his findings in his 1966 book *Psychological Stress and the Coping Process* after extensive study conducted in the 1970s and 1980s.

This theory applies to our investigation because it appropriately accounts for "stress" in its entirety—including employment restrictions or particular circumstances. Stress from the workplace is a major issue for teachers everywhere. It does have an impact on how well workers perform at work, and it also has a detrimental impact on workers' health and overall organizational productivity.

This study, which addresses teachers' stress, benefits greatly from the theoretical framework of TTSC because it addresses a wide range of work-related conflicts, including those involving inconsistent instructional strategies, competing roles and assignments, professional and personal coping mechanisms, poorly organized schools, difficult time management, a lack of support, and many more.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the teachers' level of stress in the in-person learning modality in a District under a medium-sized Division in Central Philippines during the 1st, second, and third quarters of the School Year 2022-2023. Furthermore, the study sought to determine the following: 1) the level of teachers' stress in in-person learning modality in terms of work-related and personal and social domains, and 2) the significant difference in the level of teachers' stress in the in-person learning modality when grouped according to age, civil status, educational attainment, and family income.

Research Methodology:

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-quantitative research design deemed appropriate in determining the level of teachers' stress in in-person learning modality regarding work-related personal and social. Calmorin (2016) states that a descriptive study design approach aims to discover the new truth while concentrating on the current circumstances. Different things can be the truth: more information, a broader generalization, a new "law," or a deeper understanding of a factor.



Respondents

The respondents were the 124 public elementary school teachers in a District of a medium-sized division in Central Philippines during the 1st, second, and third quarters of the School Year 2022-2023. The paper made use of purposive sampling to determine the sample size.

Instruments

To determine the level of teachers' stress in the in-person learning modality, the researcher used a self-made data-gathering instrument subjected to Validity (4.82 - excellent) and Reliability testing (0.978 - excellent). The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part 1 gathered the respondents' socio-economic information, such as age, civil status, educational attainment, and family income, for profiling purposes. Part 2 contained the questionnaire properly, with a 15-line item for work-related stress and another 15-line item for personal and social stress. In all, it has a total of 30 items.

Procedure for Data Collection

After establishing the validity and reliability of the instrument, the researcher submitted a letter to the Schools Division Superintendent seeking approval to conduct the study. After the said letter was approved, it was attached to the letters addressed to various school heads. Thereafter, the data-gathering instrument was administered to target respondents outside of school hours so as not to distract the teachers from their regular school routine. The respondents were given three days to fill out and return the hard copies of the instrument. Finally, the accomplished data-gathering instrument was encoded and tallied to the pre-formatted Excel file for an orderly tabulation.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objective 1 used the descriptive analytical scheme and mean as a statistical tool to determine the level of teachers' stress in in-person learning modality in terms of work-related and personal and social domains.

Objective 2 used the comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there is a significant difference in the level of teacher stress in in-person learning modality when grouped according to age, civil status, educational attainment, and family income.

Ethical Considerations

The protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles is essential in this study. The principle of voluntary participation requires that people not be coerced into participating in research (Trochim, 2021). As to the informed consent, the participants were fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in the research and consented to participate. As such, participants were entirely enlightened about the procedures of the entire study and were encouraged to participate by signing a consent. Additionally, several safeguards were in place to minimize harm in a research protocol that involves vulnerable participants or sensitive topics (Peter, 2015). As to the confidentiality of the results, the participants were assured that identifying information would not be made available to anyone who was not directly involved in the study. In terms of anonymity, there was a stricter standard in which the participants remained anonymous in this research study.

Results and Discussions

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data gathered to find answers to the objectives of this study.

Level of Stress of Teachers in the In-Person Learning Modality According to Work-related Stress and Personal and Social Stress

Table 1

Level of Stress of Teachers in the In-Person Learning Modality According to Work-related Stress

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I am stressed ...</i>		
1. with unfair distribution of the teaching load.	2.15	Low Level
2. in coping with ancillary works.	2.29	Low Level
3. in catching up with deliverables and deadlines of paper works.	3.43	Moderate Level
4. in getting parents involved and participating in all school undertakings.	2.38	Low Level
5. in getting the support of the School Management towards student-related	2.30	Low Level



activities.

6. getting the support of co-teachers in every school activity.	3.31	Moderate Level
7. preparing and submitting MOOE liquidation.	2.27	Low Level
8. in indigenizing instructional materials.	2.13	Low Level
9. in strictly following school rules and guidelines.	2.36	Low Level
10. in preparing DLL/DLP in advance due to a hectic schedule.	2.39	Low Level
11. in disciplining learners in the classroom.	2.23	Low Level
12. in attending meetings and conferences.	2.28	Low Level
13. in attending training outside of the school premises.	2.27	Low Level
14. Coping with conflicting demands and unrealistic time pressure.	2.53	Moderate Level
15. organizing my schedule to blend teaching and non-teaching work.	2.64	Moderate Level
Overall Mean	2.46	Low Level

Item No. 8, which states, "As a teacher I am stressed in indigenizing instructional materials," got the lowest mean score of 2.13, interpreted as low level. Meanwhile, Item no. 3, which states, "As a teacher, I am stressed in catching up with deliverables and deadlines of paper works," got the highest mean score of 3.43, interpreted as a moderate level. This means that some teachers need help with time management or balancing teaching and paperwork.

The study by Guimary (2022), which looked into how instructors' workloads and general well-being affected children's academic performance, validated this finding. A poll on the amount of their workloads and their level of workplace satisfaction was completed by high school teachers from three divisions in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. The majority of those surveyed said their workloads ranged from moderate to heavy. Additionally, they gave favorable responses in each of the three well-being domains that this study examined.

Table 2

Level of Stress of Teachers in the In-Person Learning Modality According to Personal and Social Stress

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a teacher, I am stressed ...</i>		
1. in managing my time between school and home.	2.39	Low Level
2. in budgeting monetary resources.	2.76	Moderate Level
3. with marital problems.	2.18	Low Level
4. in disciplining my children.	2.20	Low Level
5. in making sure that my children receive a good education.	2.12	Low Level
6. having my in-laws and extended family at home.	2.15	Low Level
7. while paying home mortgage and other loans.	2.11	Low Level
8. in keeping my family safe from sickness.	2.09	Low Level
9. when I see much negative news on social media.	2.05	Low Level
10. spending money with friends to dine out because of a meager budget.	2.12	Low Level
11. with very little family time and a minimal social life.	2.19	Low Level
12. in getting less support from immediate family members.	2.16	Low Level
13. in having fewer social interactions with friends because of a limited time.	2.11	Low Level
14. in patching up quarrels within the family.	2.40	Low Level
15. in reading negative social media posts and messages.	2.36	Low Level
Overall Mean	2.23	Low Level



Item No. 9, which states, "As a teacher, I am stressed when I see much negative news in social media," got the lowest mean score of 2.05, interpreted as a low level. Meanwhile, Item No. 2, which states that "As a teacher, I am stressed in budgeting monetary resources," got the highest mean score of 2.76, interpreted as a moderate level.

The result clearly indicates that in terms of personal and social aspects, some teachers need help keeping up with their personal and family budgets and finances. Most teachers are presumed heads of family, and keeping both ends meet is very stressful, especially after the pandemic when there is so much scarcity of financial resources. Teachers who are stressed with financial problems may soon have performance issues.

The findings were corroborated by Spector (2020). According to a Stanford-led study, teachers feel the pinch even in an area where their pay is significantly higher than the national average. Their financial stress is connected to job performance metrics that could greatly impact the pupils they educate. Researchers discovered that teachers in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) faced higher levels of economic stress than most American workers, based on survey data from over 2,000 teachers in the district. Furthermore, the teachers' degree of financial distress predicted attendance and their propensity to quit. Elise Dizon-Ross, principal author of the study and PhD candidate at Stanford Graduate School of Education (GSE), stated that "financial anxiety has a real impact on teachers' attitudes and behavior." "It is a real experience with serious implications for schools—it is not just a warm fuzzy feeling."

Comparative Analysis in the Teachers' Level of Stress in the In-Person Learning Modality According to Work-related Stress and Personal and Social Stress when Grouped according to Age, Civil Status, Educational Attainment, and Family Income

Table 3

Difference in the Level of Stress of Teachers in the In-Person Learning Modality According to Work-related Stress and Demographics

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	61	60.80	1818.00	0.604		Not Significant
	Older	63	64.14				
Civil Status	Single	54	59.98	1754.00	0.492		Not Significant
	Married	70	64.44				
Educational attainment	Lower	77	50.86	913.00	0.000	0.05	Significant
	Higher	47	81.57				
Family income	Lower	78	69.00	910.00	0.376		Not Significant
	Higher	46	61.25				

When grouped according to educational attainment, which obtained a Mann-Whitney U test lower than the 0.05 level of significance, which is interpreted as "significant". Thus, the hypothesis that states "there is no significant difference in the level of stress of teachers in the in-person learning modality according to the area work-related stress according to educational attainment" was therefore rejected.

This implies that age, civil status and family income have no significant contribution to teachers' personal stresses, particularly in dealing with work-related stresses. This means that regardless of their age bracket, monthly income, or marital status, they share the same level of stress in terms of workload or work-related stressors. However, their educational attainment has a significant impact on their work-related stresses. This can be attributed to the fact that those with higher educational attainment can easily deal with their paperwork and other deliverables.

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Table 4



Difference in the Level of Stress of Teachers in the In-Person Learning Modality According to Personal and Social Stress and Demographics

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	61	60.80	1818.00	0.604		Not Significant
	Older	63	64.14				
Civil Status	Single	54	62.04	1865.00	0.900		Significant
	Married	70	62.86				
Educational attainment	Lower	77	52.47	1037.00	0.000	0.05	Significant
	Higher	47	78.94				
Family income	Lower	78	79.35	703.00	0.022		Significant
	Higher	46	59.26				

When grouped according to civil status, educational attainment, and family income, which obtained a Mann-Whitney U test lower than the 0.05 level of significance, which is interpreted as "significant." Thus, the hypothesis that "there is no significant difference in the level of stress of teachers in the in-person learning modality according to personal and social stress according to educational attainment and family income" was rejected.

The result of the study indicates that personal and social stress is present every day among teachers who are married, have postgraduate degrees, and have lower income levels. This could be attributed to how married teachers carry life with a partner and children. Additionally, those who have higher education tend to be more analytical and sensitive to family issues. Furthermore, it is common knowledge that teachers belonging to the lower income bracket may eventually have some difficulties in letting both ends meet.

The teaching profession is known for its high stress levels, which can result in low job satisfaction, burnout, and subpar work output. Stress is a natural reaction to stressful or dangerous situations, but it becomes pathological when it persists over time. Chronic stress increases the likelihood of developing anxiety and depression, as well as other psychiatric disorders. It can also hinder day-to-day functioning and emotional equilibrium. Long-term stress in teachers is positively correlated with planning to leave the teaching profession and adversely correlated with job satisfaction. Withdrawal behaviors, such as physically or mentally abandoning the workplace, may also follow. According to Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (2019), prolonged stress can also result in inappropriate aggression, increased use of alcohol and drugs, excessive anxiety, mental exhaustion, and burnout, as well as an increased risk of depression.

Conclusions

Teachers' stress in the in-person learning modality, according to work-related stress and personal and social stress, were both on low levels; however, they were more stressed at work than in their personal and social lives. This can be attributed to the teacher's workload being heavier and more stressed than the family or personal issues they face.

The work-related stress teachers face is mainly related to paperwork and reportorial, all of which are on top of their teaching load. Teachers' reports and other deliverables are time-bounded, and the deadline creates pressure. In terms of their personal and social life, finances and budgeting are the ones that add to teachers' stresses. Regarding work-related stress, there was a significant difference in the level of teachers' stress when grouped according to their educational attainment.

Teachers' work-related stresses are mainly centered on deliverables, reports, and teaching works. Their educational attainment has an impact on their ability to perform at work and accomplish reports for submission. As to their personal and social life, there was a significant difference when grouped according to civil status, educational attainment, and family income. This means that between married and single, there is a difference in how they manage their stresses and how to handle them as well.

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