

# Coping with Job-Related Stress: Mechanisms of Teachers Across the Districts of Davao Del Norte Division

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**Abstract:** This study unfolded the experiences and mechanisms of teachers in coping with job-related stress. Exploring on the lived experiences of teachers in managing job-related stress is crucial as it concerns both the well-being of teachers and the quality of education they provide. In this phenomenological study, twelve (12) teacher-participants were involved and they were purposively selected from the different schools and districts in the Davao del Norte Division. In the gathering of information data, this study employed in-depth interview of participants. Using thematic content analysis, the themes on the experiences of teachers on job-related stress were Heavy Workload, Limited Resource and Insufficient Pay. Meanwhile, the coping mechanisms of teachers in managing job-related stress were Seeking Social Support, engaging in physical activities and hobbies. From the both experiences and strategies of teachers from different schools and districts of Davao del Norte, the following were the insights drawn to support teachers in managing job-related stress: Streamline administrative tasks, increase educational resource allocation and salary increases and incentives. Given the increasing job demands on teachers, understanding their coping mechanisms and developing effective interventions is necessary to support teachers, ensuring a more sustainable and productive teaching environment for the future of Philippine education.

**Keywords:** *Coping, Job-Related Stress, Mechanism, Teachers Across Districts.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Exploring on job-related stress and the coping mechanisms of teachers is essential in today's educational landscape, as the well-being of teachers directly impacts both their job performance and student outcomes. Teachers play a vital role in society, yet they are often exposed to high levels of stress due to heavy workloads, diverse student needs, administrative responsibilities, and limited resources. This strain can lead to burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and even teacher turnover, which ultimately disrupts the stability and quality of education for students. By exploring how teachers experience and manage these stressors, this study seeks to identify effective coping strategies that can inform supportive policies, improve teachers' resilience, and contribute to a more sustainable and productive teaching environment.

Teaching is a rewarding profession that allows educators to make a meaningful impact, but it also comes with

significant stressors. Wong (2020) identifies key contributors, including heavy workloads, long teaching hours, large class sizes, and students' disciplinary issues, which challenge teachers' ability to maintain a productive classroom environment. Cramped classrooms and excessive administrative tasks further add to the strain, leaving teachers with limited time and resources to focus on their core responsibilities. These factors underscore the need for systemic changes to reduce stress and support teachers in managing their demanding roles effectively.

In the global scene, Miller (2022) affirms that across the world, thousands of teachers leave the profession each year due to burnout, a syndrome marked by emotional and physical exhaustion stemming from excessive job stress. This burnout often results from overwhelming workloads, toxic work environments, challenging student behaviors, limited autonomy, and persistent scrutiny from administrators. Similarly, Suttles (2024) coveys that the International Labour

Office (2016) reported that teaching is often linked with elevated stress levels and burnout. This organization defined and recognized stress as the negative physical and emotional reaction that arises when there is an imbalance between the demands placed upon them and their perceived ability to cope with those demands, resulting in harmful physical and emotional.

In United states, teacher burnout, according to Satcher et al., (2019), has contributed to many leaving the profession, forcing administrators to address the resulting staffing challenges by combining large classes or hiring multiple short-term instructors within a single school year. Similarly, In Finland, the Trade Union of Education in Finland recently reported that one-third of teachers suffered from extensive work stress (Lämsikallio et al. 2018). Likewise, teacher stress in Bhutan predominantly emanates from heightened job demands. These demands are perceived differently in terms of how individuals view teaching responsibilities and non-academic obligations. The pervasive impact of inadequate leadership and management exacerbates stress levels, directly encroaching upon psycho-social wellbeing (Dorji, 2024).

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has investigate the incident of teacher suicide which allegedly was caused by heavy workload. The teacher suicide incidents happened in Leyte and in Cavite (Mateo, 2018). Another suicide incident of a teacher happened this recently. Relator (2024) reports that the Department of Education-Davao (DepEd-11) sets to launch an investigation into the death of a teacher in Pantukan, Davao de Oro who died allegedly from stress after getting berated by the principal.

Moreover, Escultor et al., (2022) as cited in Amata (2022) discloses that Filipino teachers experience workplace stress. Most of the teachers complain of workload as their main stressor. Class sizes in Philippine schools, especially in public schools, are big. Thus, teachers spend most of their home life checking and grading papers because there is not enough time to finish them in school.

Unfortunately, Flenniken, W. (2024) conveys that teacher burnout is a pressing and complex issue that contributes to rising teacher turnover and a declining supply of new educators, which is problematic given a growing population. While effective strategies to mitigate burnout exist in theory, schools are failing to implement them in practice.

Personally, the researcher shares similar experience of job-related stress in school. This phenomenon seems ordinary in the teaching profession but the impact of job stress must not be taken for granted. Similar sentiments are often heard from co-teachers on the burden over job stress. At the outset, this inquiry of uunderstanding how teachers cope with job stress is important because it helps us see how they handle the

challenges of their work, which affects their well-being and performance. These insights can guide efforts to support teachers and improve their job satisfaction and effectiveness in the classroom.

## II. METHOD

This study explores the experiences and the coping mechanisms of teachers on job-related stress. The present research employs qualitative phenomenology design, which entails the collection and analysis of non-numerical data. According to Tomaszewski et al. (2020), Flood (2010) emphasizes the significance of the phenomenological approach in qualitative research, which delves into the essential aspects of a lived experience or phenomenon, and can be understood or sensed from various viewpoints. It elucidated significant attributed perceived by individuals to a given phenomenon. Phenomenology, as a research design, centers on comprehending the shared lived experiences within specific groups and examining the influence of a phenomenon on individuals to unveil the significance they assign to it.

In the course of the study, the informants engaged in discussions regarding their observations and experiences and the coping mechanisms in job-related stress. The researcher utilizes in-depth interviews as the primary method for gathering information. Participants offered both subjective and objective observations and opinions based on their individual experiences. The researcher focuses on identifying common experiences and concepts raised by the participants when analyzing the collected data. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2000), as cited in Dunwoodie, Macaulay and Newman (2023), interviews offer participants the opportunity to express their emotions, biases, viewpoints, aspirations, and attitudes toward various phenomena encountered in the workplace or other organizational settings.

Moreover, there are twelve (12) teacher-participants involved in this study and they were teachers from the different schools and districts in the Davao del Norte Division. The participants were purposively selected based on the criteria that they belong to the intermediate grade level, had been a teacher for at least Five (5) years and had experienced job-related stress in their profession. Articulating on the nature of purposive sampling Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024) posits that purposive sampling found in any research paradigm and help in ensuring that quality sample is located without biases so as to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings.

In addition, as part of the ethical considerations, the participants of this study voluntarily signified their consent to take part of this study. Clear communications were established to ensure participants understood their ability to seek clarification on any aspect of the study. Prior permission to record conversations was obtained, and participants were

assured that all information would be handled with the utmost confidentiality and solely used for academic purposes. The research strictly adhered to ethical principles encompassing respect for individuals, beneficence, justice, consent, and confidentiality.

As the researcher, it was my responsibility to produce robust research outcomes, involving the formulation of research inquiries, conducting interviews, and analyzing and transcribing the data. A fundamental element of this analysis will consist of categorizing and coding the ideas expressed in the transcriptions. This methodology, as outlined by Graneheim and Lundman (2004) and referenced in Vinitha (2019), involves interlinking the underlying meanings that span multiple categories. This technique not only enhances our grasp of the participants' experiences but also permits a more nuanced interpretation of the latent content in their narratives, ultimately leading to more substantial and impactful insights.

The subsequent phase of this research entails the formulation of significant themes that elucidate key insights derived from the data. This analytical approach, referred to as Thematic Content Analysis, is characterized by the identification of themes that encapsulate the narratives present within the data sets, as articulated by King (2004) in Dawadi (2020). This process necessitates meticulous reading and re-reading of the transcribed data to reveal these underlying themes.

Moreover, this study will specifically implement environmental triangulation, which involves the comparison and integration of insights across diverse contexts to enhance the validity of the findings. According to Vivek (2023), environmental triangulation is a methodological strategy that necessitates the collection of data from multiple environments to bolster the credibility and reliability of qualitative results. This approach serves to mitigate potential biases that may arise when a phenomenon is investigated within a singular or limited setting. Nightingale (2020) further elucidates that triangulation is a methodological framework that employs a variety of data collection techniques to analyze results from the same study, thereby ensuring the validity and trustworthiness of the findings.

In summary, the data collected underwent meticulous analysis to extract essential meanings from participants' responses to the research questions. By organizing the information into key themes, I aimed to accurately convey the implications of their statements and foster a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives. This process involved categorizing and coding ideas within the transcriptions to interpret the underlying meanings in their narratives. Additionally, Thematic Content Analysis was employed to identify significant themes, and environmental triangulation was integrated to compare insights from diverse contexts, enhancing the validity of the findings and reducing potential

biases. Various data collection techniques were used to ensure the study's validity and trustworthiness, strengthening the research conclusions.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The subsequent section presents the study's findings in the form of themes, which emerged following a thematic content analysis of the gathered data. The ensuing themes and findings discuss the challenges and coping strategies experienced by newly hired teachers in their work environment. Teachers are particularly prone to job-related stress because they operate in high-pressure environments that demand multitasking and constant adaptability. They face challenges such as managing diverse student behaviors, meeting performance standards, and addressing the expectations of parents, administrators, and the community. In this study, the following are the themes on teachers experience of job-related stress:

#### ➤ *Heavy Workload*

Heavy workloads are a primary source of job-related stress for teachers, as they must manage multiple responsibilities beyond classroom instruction. These include preparing lesson plans, grading assignments, attending meetings, and fulfilling administrative tasks, often within tight deadlines. In the study of Tarraya (2023), the influence of teachers' workloads is analyzed, revealing that various studies indicate that heavy workloads and long hours adversely impact teachers' mental and physical health, their performance at work, their personal lives, and the achievements of their students. The strain of high workloads creates additional challenges for teachers, which can detract from their ability to perform essential teaching functions effectively. The increased workload demands from policymakers frequently lead to teacher burnout, making it essential to prioritize teacher satisfaction to ensure high-quality teaching performance. Moreover, a significant burden of tasks can disrupt teachers' time and emotional management, thereby diminishing their overall efficiency and effectiveness in the educational environment.

#### ➤ *Limited Resource*

Limited resources significantly contribute to teachers' job-related stress. Many educators face challenges such as insufficient teaching materials, outdated facilities, and lack of access to technology, which hinder effective lesson delivery. This claim is corroborated by the study conducted by Alson (2019), which reveals that teachers suffer from stress linked to unsafe working environments and inadequate materials and resources essential for the successful execution of their tasks. Furthermore, there is a perception of intensified monitoring and growing demands for results imposed by the administration. Moreover, Maffea (2020) highlights the considerable challenges teachers encounter while managing classrooms of 20 to 30 students on a daily basis. They are

tasked with addressing the individual needs of each student, implementing lesson plans, and dealing with insufficient resources. These job-related challenges can be quite daunting, and when coupled with a lack of resources, they may diminish teachers' passion for their profession. Consequently, when this happens, it is the students who suffer the consequences.

#### ➤ *Insufficient Pay*

Insufficient pay remains a critical issue that significantly contributes to teachers' job-related stress, a central theme in this study. Despite the essential role they play in shaping our future leaders, many educators face financial hardships due to low salaries that fail to align with their demanding workloads and responsibilities. The stress stemming from this lack of financial security is profound, highlighting the urgent need for change in how we value and compensate our educators. According to Casingal and Ancho (2022), public school teachers face two primary financial challenges. Firstly, they are unhappy with their current salaries, which they find insufficient to meet their financial needs, causing many to struggle financially and hope for a salary increase. Secondly, teachers are burdened with extensive financial responsibilities, as many are the primary earners or breadwinners in their families. This creates difficulties in managing budgets and covering numerous expenses, leading to significant financial strain.

Meanwhile, teachers utilize a variety of coping mechanisms to effectively manage job-related stress. These strategies are instrumental in maintaining emotional stability and physical well-being, both of which are essential for sustaining their effectiveness in the classroom. It is imperative to address stress, as unmanaged stress can result in burnout, diminished job performance, and detrimental effects on mental health. By implementing healthy coping strategies, teachers are better equipped to navigate challenges, thereby ensuring their continued motivation and resilience. This study examines the following coping mechanisms employed by the teacher participants:

#### ➤ *Seeking Social Support*

Teachers often utilize social support as a common and effective method to cope with job-related stress. In the Philippines, it is typical for educators to seek assistance from colleagues, friends, and family members to discuss their struggles and obtain emotional comfort. Working collaboratively with peers within the school environment promotes a sense of camaraderie, allowing teachers to share advice and practical solutions. Mohan and Sharma (2024) highlighted the profound effects of occupational stress on secondary-level teachers and stressed the importance of social support in reducing this stress. They recommend that offering encouragement, understanding, and practical help can significantly enhance teachers' psychological well-being and enable them to manage their challenges more effectively. Additionally, fostering positive relationships among educators

contributes to a supportive environment that benefits both individual teachers and the larger educational community.

#### ➤ *Engaging in Physical Activities*

The study participants recognized that engaging in physical activities and hobbies is a valuable method for coping with stress related to their jobs. Activities such as exercise, walking, and yoga play a crucial role in stress reduction by triggering the release of endorphins, which elevate mood and promote relaxation. Research by Fernández-García (2023) has highlighted the importance of physical activity for teachers in alleviating anxiety, depression, and stress, thereby enhancing their well-being. The findings indicate that committing to three hours of physical activity each week is associated with reduced levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. Moreover, it was observed that achieving 150 minutes of physical activity weekly can lead to improved overall well-being among teachers.

Consequently, this study provides in-depth insights into the various experiences and coping mechanisms that teachers utilize to manage job-related stress. It emphasizes the importance of adopting a systemic approach to support teachers effectively. The findings indicate that teacher well-being should not be viewed solely as a personal issue; rather, it is a shared responsibility that involves the entire school system, including administrators, colleagues, and the broader educational community. By recognizing the interconnectedness of teacher well-being and overall school performance, this study advocates for proactive measures to create a supportive environment. Below are the key insights drawn from this research:

#### ➤ *Reduce Teachers' Workload*

Alleviating the workload of teachers is critical for reducing the stress associated with the demanding nature of their roles. By focusing on the challenges of workload management, educators can better engage in effective teaching and support a conducive learning environment. According to Jomoad et al. (2021), teacher burnout is often a result of excessive workload, and they suggest that school leaders should systematically ensure a balanced workload for teachers. Furthermore, regular evaluations of teachers' workloads are necessary to improve the quality of education in public schools. Schools must prioritize the assignment of appropriate

#### ➤ *Increase Teachers' Salary*

Another key insight from this study is the importance of salary increases, which directly confront one of the major stressors faced by educators: low compensation. It is crucial for educational institutions to implement suitable salary adjustments and significant incentives, as these strategies are essential for improving teachers' financial security and recognizing their relentless dedication and effort. Research by Ahmed (2024) emphasized that teacher salaries are

fundamental to achieving a high standard of education. Competitive compensation is critical for attracting and retaining proficient educators, who are vital for nurturing effective learning environments. When teachers view their compensation as fair, their performance is likely to enhance, leading to improved educational outcomes for students. Moreover, adequate pay is essential for the overall stability and efficiency of the education system. Ahmed suggests that educational policymakers should prioritize the creation of competitive salary structures for teachers, which will not only elevate individual teacher performance but also significantly boost retention rates, resulting in a more resilient and effective educational framework.

#### IV. DISCUSSIONS

Overall, this study offers valuable insights into the experiences and coping strategies of teachers dealing with job-related stress. Teachers encounter various stressors, including overwhelming workloads, limited resources, and inadequate salaries, which adversely affected their mental health and job satisfaction. To combat these challenges, many teachers adopt coping mechanisms such as seeking support from colleagues, friends, or family and engaging in physical activities, hobbies, or other self-care practices to maintain their emotional and physical well-being. These strategies demonstrate teachers' resilience and their dedication to achieving a balance between personal health and professional responsibilities, despite the demands of their roles.

Moreover, this study uncovers valuable insights based on the experiences and coping strategies of teachers. To address stress and improve job satisfaction, it is imperative to reduce teachers' workloads and implement consistent evaluations that guarantee a balanced allocation of responsibilities (Jomud et al., 2021). Ahmed (2024) highlights that competitive teacher salaries are essential for high-quality education. Fair compensation attracts and retains skilled educators, improving their performance and, consequently, student outcomes. Adequate pay also supports the stability and efficiency of the education system. Ahmed calls on policymakers to establish competitive salary structures for teachers, which will boost performance and retention, strengthening the overall educational system.

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