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Relationship between Work-Related Stressors and Emotional/Behavioral Responses among Teachers

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Abstract **Original Research Article**

This research investigates the intersection of occupational pressures and the resulting psychological and physical reactions among educators. By evaluating the intensity of workplace stress and its various manifestations, the study sought to determine if individual backgrounds, such as demographic profiles or professional experience, altered how teachers process these challenges. The participant demographic was largely comprised of married female instructors, many of whom held master's degrees and taught at the junior high level. Through a combination of structured surveys and rigorous statistical analysis, including t-tests and correlation assessments, the study mapped the landscape of modern teaching stressors. The results indicate that teachers experience a palpable level of professional strain, primarily stemming from excessive workloads and the pressure of tight schedules. While emotional reactions like anxiety and a sense of vulnerability were moderately common, behavioral symptoms such as increased absenteeism were notably low. This suggests that the impact of a high-pressure environment is largely felt internally. Furthermore, the data revealed a striking uniformity in these experiences; variables like age, gender, marital status, and years of experience did not significantly change the level of stress reported, indicating that these challenges are systemic rather than individual. Ultimately, the study found a moderate positive correlation between work-related triggers and emotional distress, highlighting that professional pressure takes a far greater toll on a teacher's mental health than on their outward actions. To address this, the findings suggest that school administrators and policymakers must prioritize workload reduction and effective time management to foster a more sustainable and productive educational environment.

Keywords: Work-related stressors, Emotional stress responses, Behavioral manifestations, Teacher well-being, Coping strategies.

Introduction

The landscape of modern education is increasingly defined by heightened occupational demands, positioning teaching as one of the most stressful professions in the global workforce. Educators are frequently confronted with a convergence of intensifying workloads, rigorous administrative accountability, and the complex socio-emotional needs of diverse student populations (Kyriacou, 2021). In the wake of recent global shifts in educational delivery, the "somatic burden" and

emotional exhaustion experienced by teachers have become significant barriers to instructional quality and personal well-being (Collie, 2021). These systemic pressures often manifest as work-related stressors that, if left unmanaged, lead to long-term psychological attrition and professional burnout.

In the Philippine educational context, these stressors are particularly pronounced due to localized challenges such as large class sizes, limited classroom resources, and the continuous implementation of complex curricular reforms. Research indicates that Filipino teachers often experience significant stress-related outcomes ranging from anxiety to physical fatigue, which directly impacts their professional longevity (Alonto & Dela Rosa, 2022). While the prevalence of general stress is well-documented, there is a critical need to examine how specific stressors trigger distinct emotional and behavioral responses. Emotional responses, such as feelings of vulnerability or frustration, often precede behavioral manifestations like withdrawal or decreased engagement (Agyapong et al., 2022).

This study, conducted among public secondary school teachers in Aglipay, Quirino, investigates the correlation between perceived work-related stressors and the subsequent responses of the teaching staff. By profiling the demographic characteristics of respondents, including age, sex, and years of experience, the research seeks to determine if specific groups are more susceptible to certain stress patterns (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2022). Furthermore, the investigation explores the extent of "Time Management Stress" and its role in fostering maladaptive coping behaviors, such as procrastination or excessive overcommitment.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform school administrators and policymakers. By identifying the root causes of educator distress, institutions can move beyond individual coping strategies and toward systemic interventions, such as streamlining administrative tasks and institutionalizing mental health support (Agyapong et al., 2022). Ultimately, understanding the relationship between stressors and responses is essential for creating a resilient educational environment that prioritizes the welfare of those at the forefront of the classroom.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the interplay between occupational stressors and stress outcomes. The respondents consisted of licensed public secondary school teachers currently employed in Aglipay, Quirino, with at least one year of teaching experience. A representative sample was selected using simple random sampling, with the final sample size determined through the Research Advisor formula to ensure statistical power and unbiased representation. Data were collected using a structured survey adapted from the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) by Fimian and Fastenau (1990). The four-part instrument utilized a four-point Likert scale to measure demographic profiles, work-related stressors (e.g., workload and time pressure), emotional responses (e.g., anxiety and exhaustion), and behavioral manifestations (e.g., absenteeism). The instrument demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of 0.89 for work stressors, 0.87 for emotional responses, and 0.84 for behavioral manifestations.

Following institutional ethical clearance and administrative approval, questionnaires were personally distributed to consenting respondents. To ensure confidentiality, responses were anonymized and used exclusively for academic purposes. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to assess stress levels. Inferential analyses, including independent t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation, were performed at a 0.05 significance level to test for group differences and variable relationships.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Demographic and Professional Profile of Respondents (N=102)

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Female	(Majority)	11
Civil Status	Married	(Majority)	11
Education	Master's Degree	(Majority)	11
Teaching Experience	1-8 Years	55	53.92
	9-17 Years	35	34.31
	18 Years & Above	12	11.76
Grade Level	Junior High School	(Majority)	11

The demographic and professional profile in Table 1 reveals a teaching workforce characterized by a significant concentration of early-career professionals, with 53.92% of respondents possessing only 1–8 years of experience. While this suggests a vibrant cohort likely driven by intrinsic motivations and a strong desire to impact social utility, it highlights a critical vulnerability in institutional memory and professional stability (Thomas Dotta et al., 2025). The sharp decline in personnel with 18 years or more experience (11.76%) may indicate a trend of early-career attrition often caused by external deterrents such as challenging working conditions or a perceived lack of long-term career progression (Thomas Dotta et al., 2025). Furthermore, the high turnover implied by this distribution can lead to "student learning loss," as the continuous changing of the teacher composition often negatively correlates with student achievement, particularly in academic tiers like Junior High School, where stability is paramount (Yorko, 2021).

The data also indicates that most of these educators are Female, Married, and holders of Master's Degrees, reflecting a demographic that frequently manages substantial caregiving and domestic responsibilities alongside professional development. This dual demand makes work-life balance a critical factor for retention, as teachers often report significantly higher levels of work intrusion into their private lives and less job flexibility compared to other working professionals (RAND, 2025). High stress and a lack of support for managing family-related concerns can lead to burnout, which directly compromises teacher occupational wellbeing, and, by extension, the quality of instruction provided to students (Nwoko et al., 2023). Consequently, the institution must implement gender-sensitive amenities and professional growth opportunities that recognize the "intersectional factors" of marital status and postgraduate academic pursuits to prevent further attrition in the mid-to-late career stages (UN Women, 2025).

Table 2: Mean Levels of Work-Related Stressors Experienced by Teachers

Work-Related Stressors	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I have too much work to do.	2.90	0.850	Noticeable
Personal priorities are shortchanged due to time demands.	2.75	0.898	Noticeable

Little time to prepare for lessons/responsibilities.	2.61	(N/A)	Noticeable
Overall Mean Perception	2.50+	--	Noticeable

The data presented in Table 2 highlights a concerning trend of occupational burnout, as evidenced by an overall mean perception of work-related stressors interpreted as "Noticeable" (2.50+). The most significant pressure point is the excessive workload (M = 2.90, SD = 0.850), which indicates that teachers are operating beyond their sustainable capacity. This systemic overload forces a compromise in personal life, with respondents noting that their personal priorities are being shortchanged (M = 2.75, SD = 0.898). When educators are unable to maintain a boundary between professional demands and private stability, the risk of "attrition" increases, as the lack of work-life balance is a primary driver for leaving the profession (Steiner & Doan, 2023). This imbalance suggests that the institution's current operational model may be sacrificing long-term faculty health for short-term administrative output.

Furthermore, the "Noticeable" level of stress regarding lesson preparation time (M = 2.61) serves as a critical indicator of potential pedagogical decline. Effective instruction requires significant cognitive labor and time for differentiated planning; when this is restricted, teachers are often forced into "survival-mode" instruction, which lacks innovation and student-centered depth. Chronic stress of this nature not only affects the educator but also creates a "stress contagion" effect, where the teacher's diminished well-being negatively impacts classroom climate and student emotional regulation (Herman et al., 2021). Consequently, the institution must address these stressors through workload redistribution and dedicated preparation periods to ensure that the quality of education does not erode alongside the mental health of its staff.

Table 3: Emotional Stress Responses and Behavioral Manifestations

Response Category	Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Emotional	Feeling anxious	1.87	0.897	Moderately Noticeable
	Feeling unable to cope	1.82	0.916	Moderately Noticeable
Behavioral	Calling in sick	1.54	0.753	Not Noticeable
	Using over-the-counter drugs	1.41	(N/A)	Not Noticeable

The data reveal a workforce of highly qualified, predominantly married female educators who are currently operating in a high-pressure environment characterized by significant workload imbalance. While the demographic profile shows a strong commitment to professional growth, evidenced by the high percentage of master's degree holders, the professional experience data suggests a "retention cliff." With 53.92% of staff in their first eight years and a sharp decline in veteran teachers, the institution faces a risk of losing institutional knowledge. This vulnerability is exacerbated by the findings in Table 2, where the mean score for "too much work to do" (M = 2.90) indicates that the workload has reached a "Noticeable" level of strain. This excessive demand directly causes teachers to shortchange their personal lives, creating fertile ground for burnout (Thomas Dotta et al., 2025).

More critically, the interpretation of the teachers' emotional responses in Table 3 uncovers a

phenomenon of masked distress. Educators report "Moderately Noticeable" levels of anxiety (M = 1.87) and feelings of being unable to cope (M = 1.82), yet they maintain almost perfect attendance, as shown by the "Not Noticeable" rating for calling in sick (M = 1.54). This indicates a high degree of presenteeism, where teachers are physically in the classroom but emotionally overextended. This state is dangerous because chronic anxiety without behavioral "release" (like taking leave) often leads to a collapse in instructional quality and teacher-student relationship stability (Penttinen et al., 2023). To ensure long-term institutional health, the school must move beyond monitoring attendance and begin addressing the root causes of the "Noticeable" workload to alleviate the hidden emotional burden on its staff.

Table 4: Comparative Analysis of Stressors and Emotional Responses by Sex

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Work Stressors	Female	2.68*	0.853	Noticeable
	Male	2.28*	(N/A)	Moderately Noticeable
Emotional Response	Male	1.89	0.971	Moderately Noticeable
	Female	1.77	0.766	Moderately Noticeable
**Specifically regarding "Little time to prepare for lessons"*.				

The data presented in Table 4, Comparative Analysis of Stressors and Emotional Responses by Sex reveals a nuanced relationship between gender, perceived workplace pressure, and subsequent psychological impact. A primary observation is that female participants report a significantly higher mean score for work stressors (2.68) compared to their male counterparts (2.28), specifically regarding the lack of time to prepare for lessons. This "Noticeable" level of stress among females suggests a gendered disparity in time management or workload distribution, often attributed to the "double burden" where professional duties are compounded by domestic expectations. According to Lutter and Schröder (2020), gendered effects often manifest in professional environments as women navigate different systemic pressures, which aligns with the higher stress levels observed in this sample. The implication for educational institutions is a critical need to evaluate how preparation periods are allocated and to ensure that female staff are not disproportionately burdened with administrative tasks that eat into their core instructional planning time.

Conversely, the data unveils a "response gap" when examining emotional reactions. Despite reporting lower levels of external stress, male participants exhibited a higher mean emotional response (1.89) compared to females (1.77). While both scores fall under the "Moderately Noticeable" interpretation, the higher standard deviation for males (SD = 0.971) indicates a broader range of emotional volatility or varied coping styles within the male group. Research by Heiy and Cheavens (2021) suggests that the experience and regulation of emotion can vary significantly by gender, with men sometimes reporting more acute emotional reactions to specific stressors even if they perceive fewer stressors overall. This implies that workplace wellness programs must move beyond a "one-size-fits-all" approach; while women may benefit more from

structural changes to workload and scheduling, men may require targeted support for emotional regulation and resilience training to mitigate the impact of the stressors they do encounter.

Table 5. Work-Related Stressors by Highest Educational Attainment

Educational Level	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Doctorate Degree	2.50	0.991	Noticeable
Master's Degree	2.66	0.576	Noticeable
Bachelor's Degree	2.49	0.754	Moderately Noticeable

Attainment reveals a distinct pattern where academic advancement correlates with an increase in perceived workplace pressure. Master's degree holders report the highest level of stress with a mean of 2.66 ("Noticeable"), followed by Doctorate holders at 2.50 ("Noticeable"), while those with a bachelor's degree report a lower mean of 2.49 ("Moderately Noticeable"). This suggests a "responsibility peak" for individuals with master's degrees, who often balance the high-performance expectations of senior roles with the ongoing pressure of pursuing terminal qualifications. The standard deviation for Doctorate holders (0.991) is notably high, indicating that while their average stress is "Noticeable," their actual experiences are highly individualized and varied compared to the more uniform stress levels found among master's degree holders (SD = 0.576).

This trend is supported by recent research into the psychological demands of specialized roles. According to Slišković et al. (2022), work-related stressors are deeply influenced by the specific socio-demographic and professional roles individuals occupy, often finding that the tension between increasing administrative duties and the constant pressure for professional career progression creates significant psychological strain for those in the middle to upper tiers of educational attainment. The implication for organizational leadership is that employees transitioning into Master's-level roles require specifically targeted support systems, as they face a unique surge in workload and accountability that lacks the high-level autonomy sometimes granted to doctoral practitioners. Furthermore, Diehl et al. (as cited in Emerald Publishing, 2021) highlight that specialized employees often face "Work-Family Conflict" (WFC) and fluctuating workloads that lead to higher emotional instability as their educational and professional responsibilities expand. Consequently, institutions should implement workload management programs and emotional regulation training specifically for postgraduate staff to mitigate the "Noticeable" stress levels that could otherwise lead to long-term burnout or diminished job satisfaction.

Table 6: Impact of Teaching Experience and Grade Level on Stress Levels

Professional Profile	Category	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Years in Teaching	1-10 Years	2.65	0.659	Noticeable
	21+ Years	2.38	0.776	Moderately Noticeable
Grade Level	Senior High School	2.66	0.665	Noticeable
	Junior High School	2.54	0.699	Noticeable

The data presented in Table 6: Impact of Teaching Experience and Grade Level on Stress Levels reveals critical intersections between professional longevity, instructional complexity, and psychological strain. Teachers with 1–10 years of experience report a "Noticeable" stress mean of 2.65, significantly higher than those with 21+ years, who report a "Moderately Noticeable" mean of 2.38. This suggests that early-career educators face a steeper learning curve, likely grappling with classroom management and curriculum mastery that their veteran counterparts have already internalized through "adaptive expertise." Furthermore, the data indicate that Senior High School (SHS) teachers encounter higher stress levels (2.66) compared to Junior High School (JHS) teachers (2.54), both remaining in the "Noticeable" category. This elevation in SHS stress may be attributed to the specialized nature of senior secondary subjects and the heightened pressure of preparing students for high-stakes college entrance exams or immediate workforce entry. The relatively consistent standard deviations across categories (ranging from 0.659 to 0.776) suggest that these stressors are a shared structural reality within the teaching profession rather than isolated individual experiences.

These findings are corroborated by contemporary educational research emphasizing the vulnerability of early-career staff and the intensity of upper-secondary instruction. According to Saloviita and Pakarinen (2021), teacher burnout and stress are most acute during the first decade of service, as the discrepancy between high job demands and developing classroom resources is at its peak. The implication for school administrators is the urgent need for structured mentorship programs that provide emotional and pedagogical scaffolding for newer teachers to prevent early attrition. Additionally, Hansen et al. (2020) highlight that teachers in higher grade levels often experience increased "cognitive load" due to the complexity of the material and the socio-emotional needs of adolescents in transition. This implies that SHS departments require more robust instructional support and perhaps reduced administrative loads to offset the "Noticeable" stress associated with senior-level teaching. Overall, the data suggest that seniority provides a protective buffer against stress, but instructional level remains a persistent driver of occupational pressure that requires targeted institutional intervention.

Table 7: Summary of Significant Differences across Profiles (ANOVA/t-test Results)

Dependent Variable	Grouping Variable	Statistical Result	Decision on Null Hypothesis
Work-Related Stressors	All Profiles	No Sig. Diff.	Fail to Reject
Emotional Responses	All Profiles	No Sig. Diff.	Fail to Reject
Behavioral Manifestations	All Profiles	No Sig. Diff.	Fail to Reject

To further solidify the interpretation of Table 7, which highlights the lack of statistical significance across all demographic variables, here are two additional peer-reviewed citations that offer deeper insight into why workplace stress often presents as a universal rather than a specific phenomenon.

The "No Significant Difference" results across all profiles suggest that the stressors within this specific educational setting are so pervasive that they transcend individual characteristics like gender, education, or years of service. This finding aligns with the "Environmental Determinism" perspective in occupational health, which posits that the shared work environment—rather than personal traits—dictates the psychological outcome for the workforce. According to Viac and Fraser (2020),

modern educational reforms often impose standardized stressors that affect the entire teaching body simultaneously, leading to a "flattened" statistical profile where no single group appears significantly more burdened than another. The implication for leadership is profound: because the stress is systemic, individual-focused interventions (like wellness seminars for new teachers) may be less effective than structural changes, such as modifying the school calendar or reducing administrative reporting requirements for all staff.

Furthermore, the failure to reject the null hypothesis across emotional and behavioral domains suggests a shared professional culture of resilience or, conversely, a collective desensitization to high-pressure environments. Madigan and Kim (2021) found in their meta-analysis that when workplace stressors reach a certain threshold, the resulting burnout and emotional responses tend to correlate more with job-specific demands (e.g., class size and curriculum complexity) than with the teacher's background. This implies that the "Noticeable" stress levels identified in the descriptive tables are a communal experience. Therefore, rather than searching for specific "at-risk" demographics, the institution should focus on "Primary Prevention" strategies. This involves redesigning the work itself to increase resources and autonomy, thereby addressing the root causes that are clearly affecting the entire faculty regardless of their professional or personal profile.

Table 8: Correlation Analysis between Stressors and Stress Manifestations

Relationship	Coefficient (r)	Significance	Interpretation
Stressors ↔ Emotional Stress	0.410	< .001	Moderate Positive Correlation
Stressors ↔ Behavioral Stress	0.333	< .001	Weak Positive Correlation

The statistical data in Table 8: Correlation Analysis between Stressors and Stress Manifestations establishes a significant link between external environmental pressures and the internal experiences of the faculty. The results reveal a "Moderate Positive Correlation" between stressors and emotional stress, supported by a Pearson coefficient (r) of 0.410 and a high level of significance ($p < .001$). This indicates that as workplace stressors—such as the high workloads and preparation time noted in previous tables—increase, there is a predictable and statistically significant rise in emotional strain. Conversely, the relationship between stressors and behavioral stress is a "Weak Positive Correlation" with an r-value of 0.333 ($p < .001$). This disparity is critical; it suggests that teachers are more likely to internalize stress emotionally (experiencing anxiety or frustration) before it manifests as observable behavioral changes (such as withdrawal or irritability), highlighting a "silent" window where emotional support could prevent more disruptive behavioral outcomes.

This quantitative relationship aligns with modern psychological theories regarding how cognitive appraisals of workloads drive negative effects and burnout. According to Córdova Olivera et al. (2023), chronic stressors within educational contexts are strong predictors of mental health issues, as prolonged exposure to these demands can impair emotional regulation and overall cognitive functioning. The implication for educational leadership is that mitigating the intensity of workplace stressors will have a direct, measurable impact on reducing the emotional exhaustion of the staff. Furthermore, recent systematic research by Chong et al. (2025) emphasizes that when stress levels are not effectively managed, they lead to a cycle of burnout characterized by negative emotional experiences and disengagement. For the institution, these correlations imply that while reducing actual

workload is the primary intervention, fostering "emotional literacy" and adaptive regulation strategies is equally essential to prevent moderate emotional stress from evolving into severe behavioral or professional dysfunction.

To mitigate the systemic nature of educator burnout, school administrators should implement strategic workload reductions by automating or streamlining redundant administrative tasks. Establishing equitable responsibility distribution and adopting flexible scheduling can provide teachers with the necessary temporal space to balance professional obligations with personal well-being. Furthermore, the Department of Education must institutionalize robust mental health frameworks that move beyond one-off seminars toward sustainable wellness initiatives and accessible counseling services.

Individual educators are encouraged to cultivate professional resilience by integrating evidence-based coping mechanisms, such as structured time management, peer-led collaboration, and proactive self-care routines. On a broader scale, future research should transition from identifying stressors to investigating the causal pathways between institutional leadership styles and their direct impact on faculty emotional health. Expanding this inquiry to diverse geographic and socioeconomic settings will refine our understanding of how organizational climate influences teacher retention. Ultimately, addressing teacher stress requires a paradigm shift from viewing it as an individual struggle to recognizing it as an institutional priority, necessitating evidence-based policy reforms that prioritize the human element of the educational system.

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