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RESEARCH ARTICLE

LINKING OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND TEACHERS' PERFORMANCE TOWARDS DEVELOPING A CONTEXTUALIZED STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Teaching as a profession is becoming more challenging and demanding each day and has now been identified as one of the most stressful professions (Olivier & Venter, 2003). Teachers under occupational related stress are not able to achieve the expected high levels of performance leading to inefficient delivery of education (Kyriacou & Chien, 2004). This study investigated the influence of stress to teacher performance of the 268 secondary school teachers from Zamboanga del Sur schools' division, in the school year 2021-2022. This study utilized quantitative design and specifically used the descriptive - correlation with modified and adapted questionnaire to gather the necessary data. The results and findings concluded that the level of occupational stress factors among teachers were found to be moderately stressful along task overload, challenges met with Generation Z and financial security. The findings also indicated that there was a significant association between occupational stress and the distance from home to work profile of teachers. Moreover, teachers were found to be developing along professional growth and development and special assignment tasks. Thus, it can be concluded that Zamboanga del Sur division teachers were not well-trained in action research and workshop facilitation. Based on the examined variables there was a slight positive correlation in the level of teacher's occupational stress and their performance, as the level of stress increases, the performance level also increases. However, as stress begins to be perceived as excessive and unmanageable the performance level starts to decline. It is recommended that the Department of Education (DepEd) may adapt stress management programs before teachers' occupational stress level becomes severe or extremely stressful and they can no longer successfully cope. Stress management programs such as stress counseling through telecounseling and engaging in zumba activities may be applied. In addition, there may be trainings on the basics of financial management, continuous peer mentorship and coaching on conducting action research, teachers may be given opportunities to advance professionally and be trained facilitators in any trainings, seminars, or teacher conferences.

INTRODUCTION

The teacher role is multi-faceted and teaching has now been identified as one of the most stressful professions (Olivier & Venter, 2003). Studies of Travers & Cooper (cited in Clipa, 2017) proved that stress in relation to teaching can be more exhaustive than the stress associated to other jobs, which makes the teaching profession with the highest occupational stress. Teachers under occupational related stress are unable to achieve the expected high levels of performance leading to inefficient delivery of education and delays in national and global development (Kyriacou & Chien, 2004). Stress can threaten the achievement of goals, both for teachers and for organisations. Hence, it is imperative to assess the extent of factors determining teachers occupational stress since teachers experiencing stress are unlikely to perform well (Gitonga & Ndagi, 2016). One way of improving teacher's relationship with stress is to understand the influence of the identified factors which underpin it. According to Kyriacou (2001) and Travers & Copper (1996) factors causing teacher stress are task

overload, relationship with teachers, working with students - which the researcher will focus on dealing with Generation Z students and administrative support. In addition, Moracco, *et al* (1982) highlighted financial security as a contributory factor to teachers' occupational stress. More pressures beyond those factors mentioned diminishes performance, first gradually and then abruptly (Paderna, 1994). Talking about teacher performance, it is relative to be evaluated or measured to sustain quality education despite of the impending barriers. Teachers who experience stress are prevented from reaching their potentials as educators in effectively carrying out their responsibilities. Prolonged occupational stress can lead to several adverse consequences (Danilewitz, 2017). While it is substantial to investigate stressful factors within the teaching profession, it is equally important to understand how the teachers can cope with stress. Stress that occurs on the job may be inevitable, but Stress Management Program can be taken to manage it. If a coping method is effective, a teaching stressor should be reduced or eliminated, thus decreasing potential negative outcomes (Sheu *et al.*, 2002).

Adapting stress management programs for teachers can assist them to conveniently managed stresses of the teaching job and mitigate its adverse effects on teacher performance. Furthermore, the desire of conducting this study was anchored by the perspectives of diverse theorists and scholars. One of which is the Person-Environment (P-E) Fit Theory which is one of the earliest interactional theories of work-related psychological distress, suggesting that work-related stress arises due to a lack of fit between the individual's skills, resources and abilities, and the demands of the work environment (Caplan 1987). To resolve P-E misfit, as coping and defense, coping entails efforts to improve objective P-E fit, either by changing the objective person (i.e., adaptation) or the objective environment (i.e., environmental mastery) (French *et al.*, 1974). For example, a teacher experiencing excess task demands may seek training to enhance his or her abilities or attempt to negotiate a decreased work load with his or her supervisor (Harrison, 1978). Defense involves efforts to enhance subjective P-E fit through cognitive distortion of the subjective person or environment (e.g., repression, projection, denial) without changing their objective counterparts (French *et al.*, 1974). For instance, a teacher may respond to task overload by overestimating his or her abilities or by downplaying or ignoring excess demands. Thus, there are reciprocal consequences; that is, a person's goals and intentions influence his/her occupational performance, and the action changes his/her environment and his/her characteristics at the same time. Second theory that would support this study is the Stress Response Curve Theory created by Nixon P. in 1979 which describes the relationship between stress and performance. One of the main impacts of stress in one's life is the changes in his performance. This theory states that as the level of stress increases, the performance level also increases, to the point of eustress, or healthy tension. Near the point of fatigue, an identified area called the Comfort Zone indicates the range of stress levels that can absolutely manage and facilitates good performance levels. Yet, as stress begins to be perceived as overwhelming or excessive, the person reaches a fatigue point wherein the performance level starts to decline. When stress is perceived as uncontrollable or unmanageable, the person begins to experience a gradual to drastic decrease in performance levels, causing a decline in productivity and enthusiasm to respond to the stress (Banthia, 2014).

To adapt to a stressful situation that affects one's performance, coping skill or coping strategies should be proactively administer. An attempt to tolerate or minimize the effect of the stress, whether it is the stressor or the experience of stress itself is immensely essential. In Macro-Analytic State-Oriented Theory by Lazarus and Folkman proposed concentrating on the coping strategies that are focused on emotion or on the problem itself, as well as the functions related to them (Sincero, 2012). Lazarus highlighted active coping, where an individual is trying to control his/her emotions in response to stress, talking to others and look for social connections to help survive a difficult time, staying indifferent to what is going on around and prevent the distress from controlling one's actions, seeking to find the answer in the struggle and grow from and where one implements specific solution-focused strategies to get through the tough time and redirect actions accordingly (Chowdhury, 2021). Thus, it is imperative to assess major contributory factors to teachers' stress to address stress at the vast structured level and intervening through more direct service efforts. To capture the occupational stress factors of teachers the Modified Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire (TOSFQ; Clark 1980; Moracco, Danford, & D'Arienzo 1982) originally developed by Clark (1980) as a 30 item, 5 - factor questionnaire (identified through factor analysis: *Professional Inadequacy, Principal – Teacher Professional Relationships, Collegial Relationships, Group Instruction, and Job Overload*) with a Likert - type response ranging from 1 (not stressful) to 5 (extremely stressful). Pilot testing is completed on 400 American teachers in Georgia and Alabama. Moracco, Danford, and D'Arienzo (1982) modified the factors/domains up on their testing of the tool in elementary, secondary, and special education schools in a mid-Atlantic state and settled on the following factors: Task Overload, Relationships with Teachers, Working with Students, Administrative Support and Financial Security.

In the purpose of this research the researcher conducted another pilot testing to 55 teachers in Calamba Comprehensive High School at Calamba Misamis Occidental with the modified factors: (1) Task overload, which means job demands exceed teacher's ability to deal with. Represents the weight of hours, the sacrifice of time, and the sense of frustration with inability to complete task in the time given. (2) Relationships with teachers, which describes the quality of teachers' working relationship with co-workers at school (3) Challenges met with generation Z students, which means the challenges faced by teachers in dealing with generation Z students, such as: the lack of teachers' knowledge and control over these students (Preville, 2018), teachers also feel that these students do not adequately respond to their teaching and they are trying so hard to shift from traditional teaching and bridging their generational gap (Shatto, 2017). (4) Administrative Support, which describes how the teacher perceive the roles and responsibilities of administrators/principals towards providing primary support and guidance for teachers to improve the quality of performance and (5) Financial security, expounds on how teachers feel about being financially secured and whether their salaries would commensurate to their duties and responsibilities.

On the other hand, teacher's performance is measured based on the Philippine Professional Standard for Teachers (PPST) (DO 42, 2017) and from the work of Delas Peñas (2019) and Capadngan (2020) with the following indicators: (1) Teaching-learning process, which is defined as the performance of teachers in preparing lesson plans/daily lesson logs and instructional materials, facilitating teaching and learning through functional lesson plans/daily lesson logs and innovative teaching strategies, implementing classroom rules and regulations and managing classroom routines. (2) Learners' outcome, which refers to the teachers' ability in monitoring and evaluating learner's progress, preparing appropriate assessment tools, conducting remediation and enrichment programs and attaining the required Mean Percentage Score/General Scholastic Aptitude (MPS/GSA). (3) Community Involvement, the teachers' capability and power to bring positive and measurable change to the community. (4) Professional growth and development, which defined as the performance of teachers in preparing and conducting action research, initiating and participating in co-curricular activities and school association, and observing proper decorum at all times. (5) Special assignment tasks, which means the proficiency of teachers in facilitating training, serving as chair or member to any committee, coordinator to any subject, programs or projects in school, district and division level. (6) Core behavioral competence, it refers to behavioral competencies of school personnel such as self-management, professionalism, and ethics, result from focus, teamwork, service orientation and innovation (Dep Ed Order no. 02 s. 2015) and (7) Core skills, which highlights the teachers' performance or skills in oral communication, written communication and computer/ICT operations (DepEd Order no. 02 s. 2015). As teaching profession demands change every here and forth, teachers must be ready to adapt new curricular and current teaching methods based on the fast growing need of the education system globally (Essays of UK, 2013). Over the past years, teaching has become increasingly stressful (Sangenito, 2016) especially in adjusting to cope with the confounding amount of change prevalent in almost every aspect of teacher's life today. One way of improving teacher relationship with stress is to understand some of the potential stressors which underpin it, and how they influence the effectiveness in the performance of teacher's tasks. The literature review highlights that various researches in line with the present study have already been conducted in various settings. However, the relationship of teacher's occupational stress specifically its determining factors such task overload, teacher relationship, challenges met with Generation Z students, administrative support and financial security to teacher performance and the association of occupational stress factors to teacher's profile such as age, sex, religious affiliation, type of school, school location classification, distance from home to work, position title, educational background and length of service has not been studied substantially. The Department of Education (Dep Ed) indeed is implementing countless strategies and continuously reforming for the best curriculum.

Yet, despite of their efforts, it is undeniable that certain concerns about stress among teachers has not been given due attention. Much more has to be done to help all teachers deal with stress which could be achieved by DepEd Central Office through their policies (Galias, 2021). If teacher stress has to be taken earnestly with compelling stress management programs, this may result to a more efficient and effective delivery of the teaching-learning process (Gitonga&Ndagi, 2016). Teachers need help to identify early signs of stress and access to good skilled support, which can help them continue their work as teachers (Galias, 2021).

Statement of the Problem/Objectives: This study primarily identified and quantified occupational stress factors of teachers and correlated stress with teachers' performance.

- Special Assignment Tasks;
- Core Behavioral Competence;
- Core Skills?
- Is there any significant relationship between the teacher occupational stress factors and teacher performance?
- What stress management programs can be proposed in order to manage teacher stress?

METHODOLOGY

The study used a quantitative design by which numerical data were collected in gathering information. Specifically, descriptive-correlational using the survey approach is the most appropriate design in the study.

Table 1. Summary of the Level of Occupational Stress Factors of Teachers

Occupational Stress Factors	Weighted Mean	Description	Rank
Task Overload	3.08	Mildly Stressful	1st
Relationship with Teachers	2.43	Not Very Stressful	5th
Challenges Met with Generation Z Students	2.68	Mildly Stressful	3rd
Administrative Support	2.59	Not Very Stressful	4th
Financial Security	2.97	Mildly Stressful	2nd
Overall Mean Rating	2.75	Mildly Stressful	

Table 2. Summary of the Level of Teachers Performance

Performance	Weighted Mean	Description	Rank
Teaching-Learning Process	2.88	Highly Proficient Teacher	5 th
Learners' Outcome	2.98	Highly Proficient Teacher	2 nd
Community Involvement	2.96	Highly Proficient Teacher	3.5 th
Professional Growth and Development	2.49	Developing Teacher	6 th
Special Assignment Tasks	2.46	Developing Teacher	7 th
Core Behavioral Competence	3.05	Highly Proficient Teacher	1 st
Core Skills	2.96	Highly Proficient Teacher	3.5 th
Overall Mean Rating	2.83	Highly Proficient Teacher	

Table 3. Test of Relationship between the Teacher Occupational Stress Factors and Performance in general

Variables Correlated	Spearman r-value	p-value	Decision HO	Interpretation
Occupational Stress Factors Teacher Performance	0.223	0.000	Reject Ho	Slight Positive Correlation and Significant

- **What is the profile of teachers in terms of:**
 - Age;
 - Sex;
 - Religious Affiliation;
 - Type of School;
 - School Location Classification;
 - Distance from Home to Work;
 - Position Title;
 - Educational Background;
 - Length of Service
- **What is the level of occupational stress factors of teachers along:**
 - Task Overload;
 - Relationship with Teachers;
 - Challenges Met with Generation Z Students;
 - Administrative Support;
 - Financial Security?
- Is there a significant association between teacher occupational stress factors and teacher profile?
- What is the level of teacher's performance based on the seven domains of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) in terms of:
 - Teaching-Learning Process;
 - Learners' Outcome;
 - Community Involvement;
 - Professional Growth and Development;

Descriptive correlational studies describe the variables and the relationships that occur naturally between and among them (Sausa *et al.*, 2007). Hypotheses were postulated and the research questions determined to find out the sources of stress among teachers and the average percentage of stress perceived as being linked to teacher performance. Questionnaires were used as measuring tools. It became the basis as well of assessing and measuring the existing relationship and significance among the variables. The respondents of the study were the 268 junior high school teachers of the Schools Division of Zamboanga del Sur. The statistical treatment used were the count and percentage, weighted mean, chi-square test for independence and spearman rank-order correlation coefficient. All the data were treated with SPSS software.

Summary of the Level of Occupational Stress Factors of Teachers: Table 1 reflects that secondary teachers in the Zamboanga del Sur division were determined to be "Mildly Stressful," as indicated in the table, with a computed overall weighted mean value of 2.75. On the basis of the factors task overload, financial security, and challenges faced by Generation Z students, it can be concluded that the teachers were moderately stressed. This can be deduced from the fact that teachers do not have enough time to relax, concerned about their financial security and Generation Z students' aspirations constitute a challenge for institution and teachers, causing them to become stressed. Table 2 summarizes the level of teachers' performance as perceived by teachers' respondents. Teachers in the Zamboanga del Sur division were determined to be "Highly Proficient" with an overall mean rating of 2.83, according to the statistics. However, the results revealed that there is a minor issue with professional growth and development, as well as dealing with

specific assignments, both of which received a 2.49 and 2.46 rating, respectively. The issue is with action research conceptualization and training workshop facilitation. As a result, it's safe to assume that Zamboanga del Sur division teachers were not well-trained in action research and workshop facilitation. Teachers, on the other hand, were all "Highly Proficient" in every other area. The correlation table shows at the 0.05 level of significance, a Spearman R-value of 0.223 and a p-value of 0.000. It was reasonable to infer that occupational stress factors and teacher performance have a significant association because the p-value = 0.000 was less than 0.05 threshold of significance. There was a substantial association between occupational stress factors and teacher performance, according to the findings. As a result, the occupational stress of secondary teachers in the Zamboanga del Sur division would have an impact on their performance. Secondary teachers will face a struggle in performing well in their tasks and obligations as a result of occupational stress. Therefore, it is imperative to adapt stress management programs before teachers' occupational stress level becomes severe or extremely stressful and they can no longer successfully cope. Stress management programs are important to cope with stress and keep it at healthy level to prevent long-term damage to body and mind. Moreover, it can assist teachers in effectively managing the stressors of teaching and mitigating their negative impacts on teacher performance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and findings, the researcher concluded that in the Zamboanga del Sur division mostly young female teachers who are Roman Catholic with Teacher I were dominant in shaping and molding the youth students. The majority of them working at public schools situated in rural areas with more or less 5 kilometers away from home. The level of occupational stress factors among teachers were found to be moderately stressful along task overload, challenges met with Generation Z and financial security. This leads to the conclusion that teachers don't have enough time to relax since they have so many preparations to make at school or even at home in order to meet the deadlines, and they are as well worried about their financial stability, causing them to feel somewhat stressed. There was a significant association between occupational stress and the distance from home to work profile of teachers. Therefore, it can be concluded that the profile in terms of distance from home to work associated to the occupational stress of teachers. While there was no significant association between other profiles and occupational stress factors in general. The level of teacher's performance was found to be highly proficient along teaching-learning process, learner's outcome, community involvement, core behavioral competence and core skills. It was reasonable to infer that occupational stress factors and teacher performance have a significant association because the p-value = 0.000 was less than 0.05 threshold of significance. There was a substantial relationship between occupational stress factors and teacher performance, according to the findings. Although, the examined variables had a slight positive correlation, still it is evident that result showed occupational stress of secondary teachers in the Zamboanga del Sur division have a negative impact on their performance since teachers were found to be developing along professional growth and development and special assignment tasks and in particular were not well-trained in action research and workshop facilitation.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of the study, the following were hereby recommended:

- The school principal and division officials may enhance existing stress-management programs for teachers, focusing on their jobs and the generation gap with Generation Z students.
- To increase the capacity of the expanding number of new teachers in the service, Master Teachers and Head Teachers may perform peer mentorship and coaching on doing action research.

- Teachers may be encouraged to pursue graduate courses and given opportunities to advance professionally by school administrators.
- School-based action research workshops are highly recommended for school leaders and teachers who want to get more involved in educational research.
- To foster a research culture in schools, a functional school-based research committee comprised of school heads, teachers, and students may be developed. Researchers can be further motivated by requesting division funding or local government funds for rewards for the best researcher in each category.
- At all levels, all teachers may have an equal opportunity to be trained facilitators in any training, seminars, or teacher conferences.
- Teachers may be smarter in their finances and have to be trained on the basics of financial management.
- Other research with bigger sample sizes of secondary teachers may be done to confirm the findings.

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