



Stress and Depression among Elementary and Secondary School Teachers in the Philippines during the COVID-19 Pandemic



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ABSTRACT

Aims This study aimed to investigate the relationship between educators' demographic characteristics and their stress and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Materials & Methods This descriptive study was carried out on 21132 teachers in 14 regions of the Philippines during 2021-2022. The data were collected using the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 by online mode. The collected data were analyzed using the Pearson correlation coefficient through SPSS22 Software.

Findings There was a significant difference between the workplace stress and demographic characteristics ($p < 0.05$) except for the salary range ($p > 0.05$). There was a significant difference between the frequency of depression and demographic characteristics ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion There is a significant correlation between workplace stress and depression with demographic characteristics in Filipino teachers.

Keywords Pandemic; Stress; Workload

CITATION LINKS

[1] Preparing globally competent teachers: A new imperative for teacher ... [2] Good teachers on dangerous ground: Towards a new view of teacher quality and ... [3] Job ... [4] Exploring the relationship between salary satisfaction and job satisfaction: A comparison of public and private sector ... [5] Determinants of job satisfaction of municipal government ... [6] Online learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic: Students' ... [7] Challenges and opportunities for higher education amid the COVID-19 pandemic: The Philippine ... [8] Stress and depression in the workplace of educators in the ... [9] The outbreak of COVID-19: An ... [10] The COVID-19 ... [11] Barriers to online learning in the time of COVID-19: A national survey of medical students in the ... [12] Opportunities for education during the COVID-19 ... [13] The effect of online learning on communication between instructors and students during Covid-19 ... [14] The impact of COVID-19 on children's learning: A rapid ... [15] Education during a pandemic: A feasibility study of online classes in Bangladesh to counteract potential study gaps caused by COVID-19 related ... [16] Adaptations to a face-to-face initial teacher education course 'forced' online due to the COVID-19 ... [17] Trend of learning management system (LMS) platforms for science education before-after Covid-19 ... [18] Suspending classes without stopping learning: China's education emergency management policy in the COVID-19 ... [19] High school suicide in South Africa: Teachers' knowledge, views and training ... [20] Secondary teachers' perceptions of their role in suicide prevention and ... [21] The PHQ-9: validity of a brief depression severity ... [22] Verbal English fluency, workplace stress, and coping mechanism of secondary school faculty ... [23] Addendum to DepEd memorandum No. 291, S. 2008 (guidelines for the implementation of CSC resolution No. 080096 on working hours for public ... [24] The impact of autocratic and democratic leadership style on job ... [25] Suicide of teachers, children prompts call for govt ... [26] DepEd urged to lighten teacher workloads following suicide ... [27] Don't blame heavy workloads for suicide of ... [28] Teacher suicide in Hong Kong: Causes and ... [29] Impact of e-learning during COVID-19 pandemic among nursing students and teachers of ... [30] Strategies and problems faced by Indonesian teachers in conducting e-learning system during COVID-19 ... [31] Teachers' elementary school in online learning of COVID-19 pandemic ...

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Introduction

Teaching is a profoundly honorable profession because it shapes most professionals worldwide. The invaluable contribution of educators to society cannot be overstated; They serve as the conduits through which knowledge flows, shaping the future of generations. Recognizing their pivotal role, it becomes imperative to foster an educational environment that supports both the learners and those who facilitate their growth [1, 2]. To achieve this, it is essential to prioritize the well-being of teachers, who serve as the cornerstone of a thriving educational system. Teachers directly influence the classroom atmosphere, impacting students' experiences and learning outcomes [2]. Ensuring teachers can maintain a positive and supportive classroom environment is crucial for sustaining a healthy learning ecosystem.

One of the key challenges in this pursuit is managing workplace stress effectively. The demanding nature of the teaching profession can lead to stress and burnout, ultimately affecting teachers' well-being and capacity to effectively engage with their students. Navigating the stressors that come with teaching is an integral skill for educators, allowing them to maintain their enthusiasm, passion, and effectiveness in the classroom. Additionally, striking a balance in academic workloads is vital. While challenging and engaging academic content is essential for student growth, excessive workloads can lead to fatigue, reduced job satisfaction, and diminished instructional quality. Teachers can allocate their time and energy more effectively by ensuring that academic responsibilities are reasonable and manageable, leading to enhanced productivity and an improved overall teaching experience [3-5]. In essence, the noble endeavor of teaching goes hand in hand with the well-being of educators. A supportive educational ecosystem recognizes that the well-being of teachers is intrinsically linked to the success of students. This recognition necessitates proactive efforts to manage workplace stress, establish manageable academic workloads, and create an environment where teachers can thrive and continue to shape the future through their dedicated profession.

The pandemic changed the way instructions are delivered in the classroom [6, 7]. Teachers must adapt to the changing environment, which is the shifting of the traditional working process to a new normal. This study is the expanded version of the previous study where limitations are addressed, such as the limited number of respondents [8]. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the lives of people worldwide, including teachers in the Philippines. The sudden shift to online learning and the closure of schools have caused many challenges and difficulties for educators, leading to increased stress and depression. One of the main sources of stress for

teachers is the abrupt transition to online learning, which requires them to quickly adapt to new technologies and teaching methods. Many teachers had to learn how to use online platforms and create virtual lessons while managing their classes remotely [6, 9-12]. This change required additional work hours, which can lead to burnout and exhaustion. Teachers are also dealing with the challenges of ensuring that students are still engaged in their lessons despite being physically separated from them. Many teachers have reported feeling overwhelmed with the workload and the added pressure of providing quality education in an online setting. In response to these challenges, many schools and organizations have implemented programs to support teachers' mental health, such as providing access to counseling services or conducting wellness workshops. These initiatives aim to help teachers cope with the challenges brought by the pandemic and maintain their well-being while continuing to provide quality education for their students [13-18].

The current study sought to address a notable limitation present in a previous research effort. Specifically, the prior study had a restricted number of participants, potentially limiting its findings' breadth and depth. Furthermore, the earlier study was conducted before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a transformative global event that introduced unprecedented challenges to various aspects of life, including the educational landscape. By recognizing and rectifying these limitations, the present study aimed to provide a more comprehensive and contemporary understanding of the subject matter [8, 18].

The research seeks to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced individuals' mental well-being, focusing on evaluating their degrees of workplace stress and depression. To accomplish this, the investigation will begin by establishing the demographic characteristics of the participants, encompassing age, sex, education, and occupation. Subsequently, the study will appraise the extent of workplace stress encountered by individuals in the pandemic context and gauge their levels of depression. Furthermore, an analysis will be conducted to ascertain whether notable disparities exist between respondents' demographic characteristics and their levels of workplace stress and depression.

By understanding the respondents' demographic characteristics and mental health status, the study aims to provide insights into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals' mental health. The study's findings may help policymakers and mental health professionals develop targeted interventions to support individuals during the pandemic and beyond. Teachers teach pupils to be their best; They should also serve as role models for the kids. In the majority of cases, teachers assist pupils in avoiding

negative thinking, such as depression [19]. According to one of the study's findings, instructors unanimously agreed they should play a role in suicide prevention [20]. The previous study investigated the level of stress and depression of educators because a few suicides have been put in the news where a strong academic burden can contribute to professional stress and depression. Despite this, additional elements influence behavior; Stress and despair can act as triggers.

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between teachers' demographic characteristics and their depression and workplace stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instrument and Methods

Study design and sampling

This descriptive-analytical study was carried out in the Philippines during 2021-2022.

The study population consisted of educators operating within the elementary and secondary education sectors in the Philippines. The cumulative number of educators actively engaged in this research amounted to 21,132, hailing from diverse geographical regions across the nation. The samples were selected by convenience sampling, and the sample size was determined by convenience sampling. The study invited all teachers to participate in the survey, facilitated through an online form, which was disseminated following official consent from the Department of Education. Respondents were requested to complete the survey, which was streamlined by using the shortened link "bit.ly." All participants provided informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

Study instruments

The study instrument was the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) developed by Kroenke *et al.* [21]. The questionnaire included 20 items to assess stress and depression levels. Kroenke *et al.* [21] confirmed the questionnaire's reliability. Exploratory factor analysis explained 68.1% of the variance. The questionnaire's convergent validity ranged from 0.31 to 0.70. The questionnaire was circulated via Google Forms and subsequently extracted in CSV format to enable meticulous data analysis.

Statistical analysis

Data were analyzed using the Pearson correlation coefficient at the 0.05 level by SPSS 22 software.

Findings

The preponderance of participants, constituting 83.5% of the entire respondent pool, identifies as female (Table 1). This disparity indicates a higher representation of female educators in the Philippines than their male counterparts.

Table 1. Characteristics of the respondents

Parameter	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	17641	83.5
Male	3491	16.5
Age group (year)		
24>	919	4.3
24-34	7141	33.8
35-44	6808	32.2
45-54	4252	20.1
55<	2012	9.5
Education level		
Bachelor's degree	122	0.6
Bachelor	9801	46.4
Master's degree	8087	38.3
Master	2385	11.3
Doctorate's degree	531	2.5
Doctorate	206	1.0
Employment status		
Permanent	20572	97.3
Temporary	295	1.4
Contractual	265	1.3
Salary range (Peso)		
<10000	337	1.6
10000-20000	640	0.3
20000-30000	17862	84.5
30000-40000	757	3.6
40000-50000	1333	6.3
50000-75000	158	0.7
750000<	45	0.2
Employment durations		
<1	739	3.5
1-2	2087	9.9
3-5	5523	26.1
6-10	5084	24.1
11-15	2986	14.1
16-20	1731	8.2
21-30	2981	14.1
Teaching level		
Kindergarten	1475	7
Elementary (1-3)	5368	25.4
Elementary (4-8)	6524	30.69
Junior High School (9-10)	5634	26.7
Senior High School	2131	9.9
Region		
1	1680	8.0
CAR	451	2.1
NCR	361	1.7
2	500	2.4
3	667	3.2
4A	2897	13.7
4B	969	4.6
5	30	0.1
6	849	4.0
7	2226	10.5
8	5852	27.7
9	414	2.0
CARAGA	2814	13.3
ARMM	1421	6.7

Analyzing regional representation, Region 8 had the highest number of respondents, with 5,852 participants (27.7%). Region 10 had the second-highest participation rate, with 2,814 participants (13.3%), followed by Region 4A, which had 2,897 participants (13.7%). Notably, Region 5 had the lowest participation rate, comprising only 0.1%, with 30 respondents.

There were significant differences between workplace stress and demographics ($p < 0.05$) except for the salary range ($p > 0.05$). There were significant

differences between the frequency of depression and demographic characteristics ($p < 0.05$; Table 2).

Table 2. Comparing the mean of depression and stress according to demographic characteristics

Parameter	Stress	F-value	Depression	F-value
Gender				
Female	1.89	38.280	1.64	14.734
Male	1.96		1.59	
Education level				
Bachelor's degree	1.99	6.654	1.61	3.607
Bachelor	1.90		1.60	
Master's degree	1.93		1.60	
Master	1.95		1.57	
Doctorate's degree	2.04		1.69	
Doctorate	2.09		1.56	
Employment status				
Permanent	1.91	9.354	1.60	9.962
Temporary	2.01		1.83	
Contractual	1.80		1.66	
Salary range (Peso)				
<10000	1.88	0.927	1.69	5.2
10000-20000	1.90		1.60	
20000-30000	1.89		1.83	
30000-40000	1.91		1.58	
40000-50000	1.92		1.52	
50000-75000	1.88		1.55	
75000<	1.40		1.32	
Employment durations				
<1	1.81	17.19	1.63	49.801
1-2	1.89		1.62	
3-5	1.95		1.69	
6-10	1.92		1.62	
11-15	1.88		1.54	
16-20	1.86		1.49	
21-30	1.86		1.50	
Teaching level				
Kindergarten	1.93	9.963	1.64	18.129
Grades 1 to 3	1.88		1.56	
Grades 4 to 8	1.92		1.59	
Grades 9 and 10	1.93		1.66	
Grade 11	2.02		1.72	
Grade 12	2.11		1.80	
Other grade level	2.06		1.90	
Region				
1	1.93	25.198	1.62	21.352
CAR	1.93		1.64	
NCR	1.94		1.66	
2	1.89		1.72	
3	2.03		1.80	
4A	1.98		1.64	
4B	1.78		1.57	
5	1.78		1.89	
6	1.84		1.59	
7	1.84		1.45	
8	1.85		1.56	
9	2.05		1.74	
CARAGA	2.03		1.65	
ARMM	1.40		1.00	

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between educators' demographic characteristics and their stress and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study outlines the research findings pertaining to workplace depression among teachers. The outcomes gleaned from the study suggest that teachers, as a collective, encounter relatively low levels of symptoms typically associated with

depression, such as altered appetite, weight fluctuations, and overeating within the preceding two weeks. Similarly, the data highlights that teachers are not significantly prone to severe work-related depression. This propensity for resilience might be attributed to their educational background and adeptness at managing exigent circumstances inherent to their profession. Moreover, the study's results cast doubt on the notion that the workload alone serves as the primary instigator of incidents involving teacher suicides [25-28]. While the workload could indeed contribute to the complex issue, the research findings do not establish a direct causal linkage between workload and teacher suicides.

These findings shed light on the intricate interplay of parameters that influence teachers' mental well-being and underscore the necessity for a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors contributing to workplace stress and depression within the teaching profession. The absence of a definitive connection between workload and teacher suicides emphasizes the intricate nature of mental health challenges and highlights the importance of a holistic approach to tackling these issues within the education sector. These findings suggest that the teachers in the sample have good mental health and are not at risk of depression. However, it is important to note that this assessment only provides a snapshot of the teachers' mental health at a particular point in time and does not necessarily capture their experiences over a longer period. Additionally, some respondents may have underreported their symptoms due to social desirability bias or a reluctance to disclose sensitive information.

The results of this assessment can be useful for informing interventions and policies that aim to promote teachers' mental health and well-being. For example, the findings suggest that efforts should be focused on preventing and addressing specific stressors that may contribute to depression, such as high job demands or inadequate support and recognition. The results highlight the importance of promoting a supportive and healthy work environment that encourages open communication, positive feedback, and work-life balance [29-31].

Factors such as occupation status, education level, teaching level, salary range, employment duration, and geographic region were identified as influential factors related to depression. These findings offer an important understanding of the factors linked with depression among Filipino teachers. The outcomes of this study could be valuable for educational institutions and policymakers in devising strategies and initiatives that focus on enhancing teachers' mental health and overall well-being [7, 12].

Strength and limitations

The sample size of this study was relatively small and not fully representative of all public-school teachers across the nation. Since the sample was derived from

a single region, its findings might not accurately mirror the experiences of teachers from different regions. A larger and more diverse sample would have improved the accuracy of the findings and their applicability to a broader context. The study relied on data that participants self-reported, which introduces the possibility of social desirability bias. This means that participants might have provided responses they thought were expected or socially acceptable rather than completely accurate. This could impact the reliability of the findings. The study used a cross-sectional design, which does not allow for the establishment of causality between the identified risk factors and depression among teachers. Longitudinal studies that follow participants over time would be more suitable for establishing causality and examining the temporal relationships between demographic characteristics. Lastly, the study did not explore other possible factors that could contribute to depression among teachers, such as the nature of their work, work-life balance, and job satisfaction. Further research is needed to investigate these factors and their impact on teachers' mental health.

Conclusion

These results show a significant correlation between workplace stress and depression with demographic characteristics of the Philippine teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021-2022. However, no correlation is observed between the range of salary with stress of the workplace of the teachers.

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