



Occupational Stress and Mental Health of Migrant Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the levels of occupational stress and mental health of migrant teachers in the public schools in Semirara Island, Caluya, Antique. Factors in occupational stress are workloads, work environments, and social support. Their mental health is measured through their depressive symptoms. The primary data-gathering method used in the study was a descriptive-correlation research design survey. The respondents were drawn from Semirara Island's two public secondary schools and four public elementary schools.

Moreover, fifty-five (55) migrant teachers participated in the survey using a random sampling technique. A standardized questionnaire was used to gather data. For the statistical treatment of the study, the mode was used to measure the responses of migrant teachers and their relationship and impact. The study used Pearson's R correlation analysis. The study revealed that migrant teachers faced considerable occupational stress due to their workloads. They agreed that they had too much work to do or too many unnecessary deadlines and that their workloads caused them a lot of stress.

Conversely, the migrant teachers experienced mild depressive moods which has something to do with occupational stress concerning mental health. Subsequently, more than half of the respondents stated that they are affected by things that generally do not bother them, which they interpreted as having a mild level of depression symptoms. In general, this study suggests that the occupational stress of migrant public teachers in Semirara Island, Caluya, Antique, was an important factor in mental health. The workload and work environment affected the respondents' mental health. On the other hand, social support experienced moderate stress, which was assessed as having a substantial negative impact on their mental health. Lastly, these three (3) are good predictors of their mental health to measure their depressive symptoms.

Keywords: *occupational stress, workloads, work environment, social support, mental health, migrant teachers and Semirara, Caluya, Antique*

Introduction

The teaching profession, often considered the cornerstone of societal development, faces a growing crisis: occupational stress and its detrimental impact on teachers' mental health (Smiley, 2020). This issue is particularly pronounced for migrant teachers, who navigate the challenges of adapting to new work environments, cultures, and social dynamics. This research focuses on the occupational stress and mental health of migrant teachers in Semirara Island, Caluya, Antique, Philippines, the unique geographical location characterized by its coal mining industry and diverse cultural landscape.

The profession of teaching, which serves as the foundation for society-building, is witnessing an alarming crisis in the form of a phenomenon. The global issue of teacher migration, on the other hand, emphasizes the necessity of encouraging surroundings and practical coping strategies for teachers who are dealing with stress at work (Ennerberg & Economou, 2020). According to Bordreaue (2019), research has consistently illustrated the correlation between negative mental health outcomes among teachers and work-related stressors, including excessive workloads, challenging work environments, and insufficient social support. Stressors may result in burnout, depression, and physical health problems, thereby affecting the capacity to perform duties and contribute to student's educational well-being (Angco & Bongco, 2019).

Additionally, the distinctive obstacles encountered by migrant teachers in the Philippines further exacerbate the issue of teacher stress (Modesto, 2020). The teacher deployment policies of the Department of Education (DepEd), which are frequently determined by student-teacher ratios and geographical requirements (DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2005), may result in involuntary transfers and assignments to remote areas, thereby intensifying the stress faced by educators (Ennerberg & Economou, 2020).

To close this knowledge gap, this study intends to investigate the unique pressures that migrant teachers in Semirara Island encounter and how they affect their mental health. Currently, there are no established policies in public schools regarding the financial assistance available to teachers who are hospitalized due to mental depression or in the event of death resulting from workplace stress. This is consistent with Thompson, G. (2021), who showed that occupational stress among educators is exacerbated by overwork, inadequate compensation, and lack of recognition among teachers worldwide. It was expounded by Falk et al. (2019) in which teachers suffered acute stress whose workplaces were affected by conflicts and crises and a lack of resources.

Moreover, the results of this study will expand the understanding of the issues experienced by migrant teachers and guide the planning for suitable interventions to promote their well-being and improve the quality of education on the island. It was emphasized by Viac and Fraser (2020) that low teacher well-being was linked to poor student results and the effectiveness of their teaching strategies. The study will also provide valuable insights for policymakers and educational leaders on creating more supportive and equitable environments for teachers, particularly those migrating to new locations, through a proposed school-based action plan program to address occupational stress detrimental to their mental health.

Through addressing the particular pressures faced by migrant teachers on Semirara Island, this research aims to improve the mental health and well-being of teachers. The findings will underline the significance of realizing the particular difficulties experienced by migrant teachers and the necessity of focused interventions to improve their general well-being and professional growth. In the end, the objective of this research is to advance a more equitable and just educational system that prioritizes and facilitates the mental health of all educators, as well as effective interventions to enhance the island's educational system and promote their welfare.

In addition, to make this study more relevant, it was fundamentally anchored on the transactional model of stress and coping theory developed by Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1987), cited by (Biggs et al.; S., 2017), and delve further into why stress is such a prevalent issue in people's lives, and is primarily concerned with how a person evaluates situation before feeling and responding to stress. In addition, the general adaptation syndrome stress model, developed by Hans Selye (1936) and cited by Campbell, Johnson, and Zernicke (2013), explains the reaction and adjustment of the human body as a result of aging and other natural physiological processes that occur when we are exposed to a wide range of adversity in our daily lives and expounded by the Person-Environment Fit theory (Caplan & Harrison, 1993), that workplace pressure and tension occur when a person interacts with his or her work environment, particularly when a challenging work environment poses a threat to the individual, resulting in an incompatible PE-fit. Person and environment of a workplace.

Methods

The study used a descriptive-correlational method of research. The respondents of the study were selected using a method of random sampling, comprising fifty-five (55) migrant public school teachers currently employed in public elementary and secondary schools in Semirara Island, Caluya, Antique, Philippines, who were asked to answer the standardized questionnaire.

Prior to administering and retrieving the questionnaire, the researcher employed content validity, logical validity, or sampling validity by other authors, to validate the instrument.

The collected data were compiled and evaluated using descriptive statistics, including frequency, rank, percentage, arithmetic mean, and weighted mean. Simple correlation and, utilizing Pearson's R, examined the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The results of the analysis were then analyzed for specific issues.

Results and Discussions

Table 1

a. Work Loads	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often		MODE	DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION ON LEVEL OF STRESS
	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%			
1. I have too much work to do and/or too many unreasonable deadlines	6	10.9	7	12.7	12	21.8	26	47.3	4	7.3	Often	Severe Level of Work Stress	High Level of Stress
2. I do not have adequate control or input over my work duties..	6	10.9	21	38.2	22	40.0	6	11	0	0.0	Sometimes	Moderate Level of Work Stress	Average Level of Stress
3. I feel that my job is negatively affecting my physical or emotional well-being	17	30.9	13	23.6	21	38.2	4	7.3	0	0.0	Sometimes	Moderate Level of Work Stress	Average Level of Stress

Level of Occupational Stress in terms of Workload

This result further showed that migrant public school teachers in Semirara Island rated the level of occupational stress in terms of workload at an average level of work stress. However, concerning the workload and unreasonable deadlines, they had high work stress. This indicates that their workloads had adverse effects and harmed their well-being before they accomplished different tasks, ancillaries, and instruction for their students. This is parallel to the findings of Hosain (2016), which reveal that one of the factors in teachers' occupational stress is work overload. It is further supported by Thornton (2017), whose work revealed that teachers work for more hours at school and home to ensure meeting the demands of their work (Bravo et al., 2021).

Table 2

b. Work Environment	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often		MODE	DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION ON LEVEL OF STRESS
	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%			
1. Conditions at my work are unpleasant or sometimes even unsafe.	26	47.3	18	32.7	11	20.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	Never	Relatively Calm Level of Work Stress	Very Low Level of Stress
2. I cannot utilize my skills and talents fully at work.	16	29	25	45.5	10	18.2	4	7.3	0	0.0	Rarely	Fairly Low Level of Work Stress	Low Level of Stress
3. In general, I am not particularly proud or satisfied with my job.	37	67.3	12	21.8	4	7.3	2	3.6	0	0.0	Never	Relatively Calm Level of Work Stress	Very Low Level of Stress

Level of Occupational Stress in terms of Work Environment

This surmised that the level of occupational stress in terms of the work environment of migrant teachers was low. This shows that migrant public school teachers in Semirara Island responded favorably to their work environment, safety, relationships with their principal and coworkers, and feelings of confidence in their work environment. However, a small percentage of them are depressed. This is paralleled to the study of Gu et al. (2019), which revealed that the employer should provide good working conditions to cope with unpredictable changes in the school environment to achieve success and increase employee efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, and job dedication.

Table 3

c. Social Support	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always or Almost		MODE	DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION ON LEVEL OF STRESS
	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%			
1.1 I find it difficult to express my opinions or feelings about my job conditions to my superior.	13	23.6	22	40.0	15	27.3	5	9.1	0	0.0	Rarely	Fairly Low Level of Work Stress	Low Level of Stress
2. I do not receive appropriate appreciation or rewards for good performance.	22	40.0	18	32.7	13	23.7	1	1.8	1	1.8	Never	Relatively Calm Level of Work Stress	Very Low Level of Stress
3. I tend to have frequent arguments with superiors, co-workers and or customers.	32	58.2	14	25.5	9	16.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	Never	Relatively Calm Level of Work Stress	Very Low Level of Stress
4. I feel that job pressures interfere with my family or personal life.	16	29.1	19	34.5	21	38.2	3	5.5	0	0.0	Sometimes	Moderate Level of Work Stress	Average Level of Stress

Level of Occupational Stress in Terms of Social Support

It emphasized that the level of occupational stress of migrant teachers, in terms of social support, is considered a low level of work stress. This implied that the support of the administrators, colleagues, and stakeholders to migrant public teachers in Semirara, Island had a positive response, but due to their job pressures like meeting the deadline and the change in the education system in their new normal set up, it added up to their stress and had negatively affected their relationship with their family, but at a moderate level, which means it was manageable and this was supported by Zhou and Yao (2020) discovered that support from family, friends, and community is important to teachers' efficacy, and that social support can help relieve acute stress symptoms, and when it addresses the psychological needs of the individual, it strengthens the teacher's sense of control.

Table 5

The relationship between occupational stress and migrant teachers' mental health in Semirara, Island, Caluya, and Antique.

Questions	Rarely or None of the Time		Some or a Little of the Time		Occasionally or Moderate		Most or All of the Time		MODE	DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION ON THE LEVEL OF DEPRESSION
	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%			
Components of Depressive Symptoms (Depressive Moods)											
1. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.	22	40.0	31	56.4	1	1.8	1	1.8	Some or a Little of the Time	Mildly Depressed	Low Level of Depression
2. I felt depressed.	24	43.6	27	49.1	4	7.3	0	0.0	Some or a Little of the Time	Mildly Depressed	Low Level of Depression
3. I felt sad.	22	40.0	30	54.6	2	3.6	1	1.8	Some or a Little of the Time	Mildly Depressed	Low Level of Depression
4. I felt lonely.	23	41.8	28	50.9	4	7.3	0	0.0	Some or a Little of the Time	Mildly Depressed	Low Level of Depression
Components of Depressive Symptoms (Loss of Appetite)											
5. I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.	34	61.8	19	34.6	1	1.8	1	1.8	Rarely or None of the Time	Not Depressed	Very Low Level of Depression
Components of Depressive Symptoms (Feelings of Guilt and Worthlessness)											
6. I thought my life had been a failure.	38	69.1	15	27.3	1	1.8	1	1.8	Rarely or None of the Time	Not Depressed	Very Low Level of Depression
7. I felt that everything I did was an effort.	12	21.8	22	40.0	9	16.4	12	21.8	Some or a Little of the Time	Mildly Depressed	Low Level of Depression
8. I felt that I was just as good as other people. ☹	14	25.4	17	30.9	20	36.4	4	7.3	Some or a Little of the Time	Mildly Depressed	Low Level of Depression
9. I had crying spells.	19	34.5	31	56.4	5	9.1	0	0.0	Some or a Little of the Time	Mildly Depressed	Low Level of Depression
Components of Depressive Symptoms (Feelings of Helplessness and Hopelessness)											
10. I could not get "going".	31	56.4	21	38.2	3	5.4	0	0.0	Rarely or None of the Time	Not Depressed	Very Low Level of Depression
11. I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family or friends.	28	50.9	26	47.3	1	1.8	0	0.0	Rarely or None of the Time	Not Depressed	Very Low Level of Depression
12. I was happy ☺	5	9.1	3	5.5	23	41.8	24	43.6	Rarely or None of the Time	Not Depressed	Very Low Level of Depression
13. I felt hopeful about the future. ☺	6	10.9	8	14.5	11	20.0	30	54.6	Rarely or None of the Time	Not Depressed	Very Low Level of Depression
14. I enjoyed life. ☺	6	10.9	4	7.3	10	18.2	35	63.6	Rarely or None of the Time	Not Depressed	Very Low Level of Depression
Components of Depressive Symptoms (Psychomotor Retardation)											
15. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.	21	38.2	26	47.3	8	14.5	0	0.0	Some or a Little of the Time	Mildly Depressed	Low Level of Depression
16. I talked less than usual.	18	32.7	22	40.0	13	23.6	2	3.6	Some or a Little of the Time	Mildly Depressed	Low Level of Depression
17. I felt fearful.	23	41.8	25	45.5	7	12.7	0	0.0	Some or a Little of the Time	Mildly Depressed	Low Level of Depression
18. People were unfriendly.	33	60.0	22	40.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	Rarely or None of the Time	Not Depressed	Very Low Level of Depression
19. I felt that people dislike me.	20	36.4	27	49.1	8	14.5	0	0.0	Some or a Little of the Time	Mildly Depressed	Low Level of Depression
Components of Depressive Symptoms (Sleep Disturbance)											
20. My sleep was restless.	20	36.4	27	49.1	8	14.5	0	0.0	Some or a Little of the Time	Mildly Depressed	Low Level of Depression

The table shows the level of mental health in terms of depressive symptoms of migrant public school teachers in Semirara Island fall under mild depression or low level of depressive symptoms or dysthymia- that lasts for several years (Medical et al., 2021). This means that they experienced distressing symptoms, yet it only had a secondary effect on their social and work life. They experience depression, or sometimes they feel low, sad, or fed up. Their positive outlook in lives amid the pandemic is immeasurable, and the stress was manageable. Although it is at a low level of depression, it has a dangerous effect if taken for granted and, if not given proper attention, will lead to severe depression.

Table 6 Correlation

Mental Health	Magnitude r value	Direction	Description	Interpretation
Workload	0.370	Directly Correlational	Low	Significant
Work Environment	0.467	Directly Correlational	Low	Significant
Social Support	0.657	Directly Correlational	Moderate	Significant

Relationship between Occupational Stress and Mental Health

Critical r – value= 0.22

Table 6 represents the model summary of the levels of occupational stress and mental health of migrant teachers in Semirara Island, Caluya, Antique. The relationship between the level of occupational stress and the level of mental health on workload, work environment, and social support, as revealed by the computed r-value on workload, work environment, and social support, is greater than the critical value that is $|0.370, 0.467, 0.657| > |0.22|$, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant relationship between the level of occupational stress and the level of mental health of migrant teachers in Semirara Island, Caluya, Antique.

In general, this surmised that the occupational stress of migrant public teachers in Semirara Island had a significant effect on their mental health, but at a lower level. The workloads and work environment had fewer adverse effects on mental health. In contrast, social support had a moderate level of adverse effect, which indicated the highest source of stress on their mental health. Therefore, occupational stress for migrant teachers implies that social support is vital. The harmonious relationship of migrant teachers in the workplace and the support of their families, administrators, coworkers, and other stakeholders play an essential role in stress management. They carry the burden without hesitation whatever amount of work is put on their shoulders to accomplish different tasks, auxiliaries, and instruction for their students. This means the work atmosphere and assistance from others are favorable, and they can manage stress. Even though stress existed and hurt mental health, it was manageable, and teachers had stress management tools. The reason for this was explained by the transactional theory and coping mechanism of Lazarus (1986) Lazarus and Folkman(1987) that our environment is one of the significant contributors to our stress, although it is a case-to-case basis depending on the individual's perceptions of what is stressful for them and teachers have ways of coping with their stress, and it is supported by the theory of Hans Selye (1936) of general adaptation syndrome, in which the ability to adapt in a stressful situation and the coping mechanism and managing the stress had been related in this study and the theory of transactional model of stress and coping theory by Lazarus and Folkman (1987) outweigh the negative experience of the teachers. These findings point to the need for initiatives that improve migrant teachers' social support networks, which has significant ramifications for occupational health and education policy and practice.

Conclusion and Recommendation

These results highlight the importance of protecting teachers' mental health to ensure both student well-being and high-quality teaching. As a result, special mental support will be provided to those teachers who are most vulnerable to the effects of being migrant teachers, to help them overcome crisis and perform better teaching.

The study confirms a connection between occupational stress and mental health, with social support emerging as the most significant contributor to stress levels. The study underlines the importance of implementing school-based mental health programs that promote stress management skills, foster a pleasant work environment, and provide access to mental health resources to fulfill the unique needs of migrant teachers.

To address the mental health concerns faced by migrant teachers and improve their well-being, the study recommends that administrators do a training needs analysis to identify courses and seminars that will raise their morale and confidence. The Department of Education and school principals may consider incorporating stress management seminars for teachers into their school improvement plans and strengthening guidance-related programs in all public schools to address the needs of teachers and students who may be suffering from mental illnesses.

Moreover, the administrators can tap the local Government unit for assistance, such as hiring a psychologist or psychiatrist and creating a check-up schedule. Promote the mental health of academic staff and formulate a policy under which teachers are compensated if they suffer stress at work; provide financial assistance and other necessary benefits if they are hospitalized or, in the worst-case scenario, die.

Lastly, future research should include all public and private school teachers in Semirara Island to understand stress levels across different school settings better.

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