

# Stress and Depression in the Workplace of Educators in the Philippines

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Workplace stress and depression should be properly treated to maintain productivity in teaching. Unmanaged stress and depression could lead to severe outcomes that affect the environment in the classroom. Thus, managing stress and preventing depression in the workplace are significant aspects of successful teaching.

**Methods:** This study aims to determine the level of workplace stress and depression of the educators in the Philippines by gathering their demographic profiles, levels of workplace stress, and the level of depression. A correlation was used if there is a significant relation in the profile between workplace stress and a state of depression. This questionnaire-based descriptive survey was done among 407 educators during the school year 2019-2020.

**Results:** Based on the study results, teachers disagree that they experience stress in the workplace, and teachers seldom experience depression. The difference shows that the level of stress and depression are lower at vocational and college levels.

**Conclusion:** Based on the findings, teachers should understand how to practice stress management and prevent depression. School administrators and policymakers should look at possible interventions to minimize the level of stress and depression of educators.

**Key words:** depression, educators in the Philippines, workload stress

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching as the noblest profession is the source of all professionals in the world. Without teachers, there will be no knowledge imparted and transferred. To continuously improve the educational system, healthy teachers are needed to maintain a happy environment in the classroom, and satisfied teachers reflect their strong motivation for their job.<sup>1</sup> Thus, managing stress in the workplace is one of the important goals a teacher

should aim to succeed because burnout among professionals is likely to develop an adverse effect on their life that may affect the workplace which may lead to the decreasing productivity of the teachers.<sup>2</sup>

A number of suicide cases of teachers in the Philippines provide alarming results in the education sector of the country.<sup>3</sup> Based on several media reports, the Department of Education is mourning the death of a teacher and says that they will look into it if it is work related. The Department also clarifies that the workload should not be blamed for the teacher's suicide because other factors may contribute.<sup>4,5</sup> While the Teachers' Dignity Coalition (TDC) met with DepEd (Department of Education) officials to discuss concerns over the supposed workload, it cited that the heavy burden of paperwork is one of the reasons for the teacher who hanged herself in one case of teachers' suicide in 2018.<sup>5</sup>

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While the education sector refuses to correlate workload with the suicides, they still emphasized that it is a wake-up call for public school teachers to learn how to manage work pressures while reacting to news circulating on social media that heavy paperwork had prompted one multi-grade teacher to commit suicide. The Department of Education urged to lighten teacher workloads.<sup>6</sup> Due to the numerous reports, the secretary of the Department of Education said that they have already reduced the workload of teachers, which includes clerical and paper works. The secretary also added that they are currently studying how to unload further teachers based on news report.<sup>7</sup>

The teacher serves as role model who are supportive in bringing out the fullest potential of their students. In most cases, teachers help the students to avoid depression.<sup>8</sup> One result of the study shows that teachers overwhelmingly agreed that they should have a role in suicide prevention.<sup>9</sup>

Teachers' suicide is not new; there have been reported cases in the past such as the three Chinese teachers in Hong Kong in 1994, which were preceded by the suicides of several students. In the investigated study, teachers are said to have a more significant workload in addressing the needs of more troubled students which may increase their stress levels.<sup>1</sup> Non-teaching career is not excluded from the historical issue of suicide. Several studies linked workload to depression and suicidal thoughts. One study shows a review of stress and occupational difficulties experienced by veterinary surgeons. The results show that occupational stressors included long working hours, heavy workload, poor work-life balance, and difficult client relations as stressors that contribute to depression and suicidal thoughts.<sup>11-13</sup>

Despite the reported cases in the Philippines, the result of the study is different from the United States of America, where teachers have the lowest suicide rate of any profession. While workers in farming, fishing, and forestry jobs had the highest rate: 84.5 per 100,000 workers, the suicide rate among people in education, training, and library jobs was 7.5 per 100,000 workers.<sup>14,15</sup> Comparing the workload in the United States teachers, U.S. teachers in grades 10 through 12 spent an average of 1,076 hours teaching students each year, while the global average is just 655 hours.<sup>16-18</sup> Based on the study, teachers' working hours outside the Philippines are 3 to 5 hours a day.

The report covers all 34 OECD member countries and ten partners countries.<sup>19</sup>

Educators in the Philippines refer to those in the teaching career; these are teachers, instructors, and professors. Elementary Teachers teach from Grade 1 to 8, Junior High School Teachers teach Grade 9 to 10, and Senior High School Teachers teach Grade 11 and 12.<sup>20</sup> Those teaching in the Vocational Programs and Higher Educational Institutions are called Instructors or Professors depending on the rank.<sup>21</sup> The regular workload for teachers is 6 hours a day or 30 hours a week for a full-time teacher, which still excludes other functions as a teacher.<sup>20</sup> While in State Universities and Colleges, a typical full-time instructor or professor handles 18 hours of teaching load per week with full teaching time, excluding functions in research and community extension.<sup>22</sup> Some faculties in the state universities have a maximum of 3 to 6 hours a week of teaching load because of full-time Graduate Schooling as part of the scholarship program provided by the Commission on Higher Education due to K to 12 transition in the Philippines.<sup>23</sup>

Based on the brief literature review, it can be seen that stress and depression in the workplace can be caused by heavy academic workloads. Despite this, other factors that affect stress and depression can be the triggering factors. In the United States, teacher has the lowest suicidal rate as mentioned.

This study aimed to determine the level of workplace stress and depression of educators in the Philippines which includes the primary, secondary and tertiary educators. A correlation was investigated if there was a significant difference in the profile between workplace stress and a state of depression.

## METHODS

This research study used the questionnaire-based descriptive survey method. The descriptive method was employed to describe the nature of a situation as it exists at the time related to this study in 2019.

The target respondents of this study were all the educators in the Philippines employed in the Department of Education (DepEd), Technical Education Vocational and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and State Universities and Colleges (SUC). The teachers were invited to participate in the survey by answering an online form that was distributed in

social media groups such as CHED K to 12 Program Scholars group, TESDA Teachers group, and DepEd Tambayan Facebook Group. Purposive sampling was used to gather the information from respondents. The sample size in this study was 407 teachers.

The instrument was adopted from the American Institute of Stress<sup>24,25</sup> and the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9).<sup>26,27</sup> Participants were requested to complete the survey by posting the link in the three social media groups. The researcher shortens the link using bit.ly. The survey questionnaire was floated using Google Forms and extracted in database format for analysis. The validated and original instrument was adopted as it is and translation is not needed. Frequency and Percentage were used in the primary objectives, such as the profile of the respondents. The average weighted mean was also used in determining the interpretation based on the Likert rating scale, the researcher used Likert scale to determine the level of each of the statements which provides a better interpretation than adopting the methodology scoring of the existing questionnaire.

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to measure correlation that is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). To simplify statistical computation, all data was coded into the software SPSS for faster analysis of data.

## RESULTS

The table below shows the socio-demographic profiles of the study participants which includes sex, employment status, employment type, teaching level, level of education, salary range, length of service and region.

The following table shows the level of workplace stress of the educators. Each statement is situational and can be interpreted independently based on the mean and descriptive equivalent.

The following table shows the level of workplace depression of the educators. Each statement is situational and can be interpreted independently based on the mean and descriptive equivalent.

A significant difference between the level of workplace stress and profile variables is shown in the table. The table shows that there is a significant difference between the profile variables across teaching level, level of educational attainment, and salary.

A significant difference between the level of workplace depression and profile variables is shown in the table. The table shows that there is a significant difference between the profile variables across employment type, teaching level, level of educational attainment, and salary.

**Table 1:** Likert Scale Used

Range	Descriptive Equivalent	Descriptive Equivalent
3.25 to 4.00	Strongly Agree	Often
2.50 to 3.24	Agree	Sometimes
1.75 to 2.49	Disagree	Seldom
1.00 to 1.74	Strongly Disagree	Never

**Table 2:** Socio-Demographic Profile

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	106	26
Female	301	74
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100</b>
Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage
Regular/Permanent	375	92.1
Probationary/Temporary	13	3.2
Contractual/Contract of Service/Part-Time	19	4.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100</b>
Employment Type	Frequency	Percentage
Government	369	90.7
Private	38	9.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>Teaching Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Kindergarten	6	1.5
Elementary (Grade 1 to 3)	55	13.5
Elementary (Grade 4 to 8)	96	23.6
Junior High School (Grade 9 and 10)	89	21.9
Senior High School (Grade 11 and 12)	77	18.9
Vocational Level	45	11.1
Undergraduate / College	39	9.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Vocational or Bachelor's Level	1	2
Bachelor's Graduate	102	25.1
Master Level	150	36.9
Masteral Graduate	69	17
Doctoral Level	71	17
Doctoral Graduate	14	3.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Salary Range</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 10,000	53	13
10,001 to 20,000	271	66.6
20,001 to 30,000	37	9.1
30,001 to 40,000	18	4.4
40,001 to 50,000	6	1.5
50,001 to 75,000	16	3.9
75,001 to 100,000	6	1.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>99.5</b>
<b>Length of Service</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than a year	24	5.9
1 to 2 years	41	10.1
2 to 5 years	107	26.4
6 to 10 years	104	25.6
11 to 15 years	67	16.5
16 to 20 years	25	6.2
21 to 30 years	32	7.9
30 years and above	7	1.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Region</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Region 1	71	17.4
Cordillera Administrative Region	13	3.2
National Capital Region	33	8.1
Region 2	18	4.4
Region 3	38	9.3
Region 4A	67	16.5
Region 4B	6	1.5
Region 5	9	2.2
Region 6	21	5.2
Region 7	56	13.8
Region 8	41	10.1
Region 9	27	6.6
Caraga Administrative Region	5	1.0
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	1	0.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3:** Level of Workplace Stress of the Teachers

Indicators of Workplace Stress	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
I can't honestly say what I really think or get things off my chest at work.	2.55	Agree
My job has a lot of responsibility, but I don't have very much authority	2.77	Agree
I could usually do a much better job if I were given more time	3.18	Agree
I seldom receive adequate acknowledgment or appreciation when my work is really good	2.74	Agree
In general, I am not particularly proud or satisfied with my job	2.22	Disagree
I have the impression that I am repeatedly picked on or discriminated against at work	2.13	Disagree
My workplace environment is not very pleasant or safe	2.22	Disagree
My job often interferes with my family and social obligations, or personal needs	2.64	Agree
I tend to have frequent arguments with superiors, coworkers, or customers	2.00	Disagree
Most of the time, I feel I have very little control over my life at work	2.40	Disagree
Weighted Mean	2.49	Disagree

**Table 4:** Level of Depression of the Teachers

Depression Assessment	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
How often have you been bothered by feeling down, depressed, irritable, or hopeless over the last two weeks?	2.18	Seldom
How often have you been bothered that you have little interest or pleasure in doing things over the last two weeks?	2.18	Seldom
How often have you been bothered by trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or sleeping too much over the last two weeks?	2.25	Seldom
How often have you been bothered that you have a poor appetite, weight loss, or overeating over the last two weeks?	2.12	Seldom
How often have you been bothered by feeling tired or having little energy over the last two weeks?	2.50	Sometimes
How often have you been bothered by feeling bad about yourself, feeling that you are a failure, or letting yourself or your family down over the last two weeks?	2.07	Seldom
How often have you been bothered that you have trouble concentrating on things like schoolwork, reading, or watching TV over the last two weeks?	2.19	Seldom
How often have you been bothered that you have trouble concentrating on things like school work, reading, or watching TV over the last two weeks?	1.87	Seldom
How often have you been bothered by thoughts that you would be better off dead, or hurting yourself in some way over the last two weeks?	1.64	Never
How often have you felt that you want to give up?	1.93	Seldom
Weighted Mean	2.09	Seldom

**Table 5:** Significant Difference between Level of Workplace Stress and profile variables

Profile Variables	Groups	Mean	Result	F-value	Sig. Level	Interpretation
Sex	Male	2.42	Disagree	1.187	0.277	Not Significant
	Female	2.51	Agree			
Employment Status	Regular/Permanent	2.49	Disagree	0.118	0.889	Not Significant
	Probationary/Temporary	2.40	Disagree			
	Contractual/Contract of Service/Part-Time	2.48	Disagree			

Employment Type	Government	2.50	Agree	3.210	0.074	Not Significant
	Private	2.30	Disagree			
Teaching Level	Kindergarten	2.85	Agree	5.016	0.00	Significant
	Elementary (Grade 1 to 3)	2.46	Disagree			
	Elementary (Grade 4 to 8)	2.49	Disagree			
	Junior High School (Grade 9 and 10)	2.63	Agree			
	Senior High School (Grade 11 and 12)	2.62	Agree			
	Vocational Level	2.22	Disagree			
	Undergraduate / College	2.14	Disagree			
Level of Education	Vocational or Bachelor's Level	2.60	Agree	3.185	0.008	Significant
	Bachelor's Graduate	2.62	Agree			
	Masteral Level	2.55	Agree			
	Masteral Graduate	2.33	Disagree			
	Doctoral Level	2.31	Disagree			
	Doctoral Graduate	2.34	Disagree			
Salary Range	Less than 10,000	2.50	Agree	2.192	0.043	Significant
	10,001 to 20,000	2.52	Agree			
	20,001 to 30,000	2.25	Disagree			
	30,001 to 40,000	2.13	Disagree			
	40,001 to 50,000	2.05	Disagree			
	50,001 to 75,000	2.61	Agree			
	75,001 to 100,000	2.98	Agree			
Length of Service	Less than a year	2.38	Disagree	1.197	0.303	Not Significant
	1 to 2 years	2.53	Agree			
	2 to 5 years	2.47	Disagree			
	6 to 10 years	2.57	Agree			
	11 to 15 years	2.55	Agree			
	16 to 20 years	2.38	Disagree			
	21 to 30 years	2.32	Disagree			
	30 years and above	2.05	Disagree			
Region	Region 1	2.40	Disagree	0.632	0.827	Not Significant
	CAR	2.49	Disagree			
	NCR	2.63	Agree			
	Region 2	2.56	Agree			
	Region 3	2.52	Agree			
	Region 4A	2.44	Disagree			
	Region 4B	2.13	Disagree			
	Region 5	2.21	Disagree			
	Region 6	2.52	Agree			
	Region 7	2.49	Disagree			
	Region 8	2.54	Agree			
	Region 9	2.62	Agree			
	CARAGA	2.38	Disagree			
	ARMM	2.70	Agree			

**Table 6:** Significant Difference between Frequency of Depression and profile variables

Profile Variables		Groups	Mean		F-value	Sig. Level	Interpretation
Sex	Male		2.09	Seldom	0.011	0.915	Not Significant
	Female		2.10	Seldom			
Employment Status	Regular/Permanent		2.08	Seldom	1.57	0.21	Not Significant
	Probationary/Temporary		2.08	Seldom			
	Contractual/Contract of Service/Part-Time		2.40	Seldom			
Employment Type	Government		2.17	Seldom	4.46	0.035	Significant
	Private		1.84	Seldom			
Teaching Level	Kindergarden		2.17	Seldom	6.44	0.000	Significant
	Elementary (Grade 1 to 3)		2.27	Seldom			
	Elementary (Grade 4 to 8)		2.22	Seldom			
	Junior High School (Grade 9 and 10)		2.33	Seldom			
	Senior High School (Grade 11 and 12)		2.05	Seldom			
	Vocational Level		1.72	Never			
Level of Education	Undergraduate / College		1.61	Never	7.90	0.000	Significant
	Vocational or Bachelor's Level		2.60	Sometimes			
	Bachelor's Graduate		2.62	Sometimes			
	Masteral Level		2.55	Sometimes			
	Masteral Graduate		2.33	Seldom			
	Doctoral Level		2.31	Seldom			
Salary Range	Doctoral Graduate		2.34	Seldom	4.29	0.000	Significant
	Less than 10,000		2.09	Seldom			
	10,001 to 20,000		2.14	Seldom			
	20,001 to 30,000		1.83	Seldom			
	30,001 to 40,000		1.66	Never			
	40,001 to 50,000		1.31	Never			
Length of Service	50,001 to 75,000		2.52	Sometimes	1.28	0.257	Not Significant
	75,001 to 100,000		2.78	Sometimes			
	Less than a year		2.25	Seldom			
	1 to 2 years		2.25	Seldom			
	2 to 5 years		2.14	Seldom			
	6 to 10 years		2.08	Seldom			
	11 to 15 years		2.09	Seldom			
	16 to 20 years		1.74	Never			
21 to 30 years		2.0	Seldom				
Region	30 years and above		1.95	Seldom	0.951	0.50	Not Significant
	Region 1		2.23	Seldom			
	CAR		2.24	Seldom			
	NCR		2.17	Seldom			
	Region 2		2.09	Seldom			
	Region 3		2.13	Seldom			
	Region 4A		1.90	Seldom			
	Region 4B		1.95	Seldom			
	Region 5		1.61	Never			
	Region 6		2.01	Seldom			
	Region 7		2.18	Seldom			
	Region 8		2.11	Seldom			
	Region 9		1.99	Seldom			
CARAGA		2.22	Seldom				
ARMM		2.30	Seldom				

## DISCUSSION

Having a job enhances an individual's health and overall attitude toward life in many ways. However, many people experience so much stress at work that it surpasses any potential benefits and even risks their health. As teaching is deemed a significant and noble profession, academic personnel should maintain good health to deliver quality education for all.

Based on the profile of the respondents, the majority of the respondents were females, with 74% of the total respondents. This implies that there are more female educators in the Philippines compared to male educators. In terms of employment type, the majority of the respondents are permanent in the government sector. In terms of educational attainment, the majority of the respondents have ongoing Master's units with a salary range of Php10,000 to Php20,000, followed by Php20,000 to Php30,000. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents are engaged in teaching from 2 to 5 years. This implies that majority of the educators in the Philippines handle the rank of Instructor 1 for higher educational institutions, and Teacher 1 for basic education.

In terms of level of stress, teachers disagree that they experience stress in the workplace. While the result of the study, in general, is positive, workplace stress showed that most teachers need more time to finish the required tasks given. As stated in the literature review, the regular workload for teachers at the elementary and secondary levels was 6 hours a day or 30 hours a week, which still excluded other functions as a teacher.<sup>20</sup> This implies that the educators in the Philippines were overloaded with work; hence, more time is needed to finish a certain task assigned to them. The detailed result also shows that most educators agree that work is continuous as a teacher and does not practice their authority over their work where lack of acknowledgment and appreciation is also an issue as there is an impact of autocratic and democratic leadership style on their job satisfaction.<sup>28</sup> In terms of the level of depression, teachers experience less depression where educators disagree that they are depressed. While the result of the study in general, is positive, the study shows that teachers are bothered by feeling tired or having little energy over the last two weeks. The overall result shows that educators seldom experience depression.

Despite the study doesn't support the several news reports where stress and depression is linked to suicide, the suicide rate of educators is alarming in the education sector of the Philippines.<sup>3</sup> The Department of Education clarifies that the workload should not be blamed for the teacher's suicide because other factors may contribute.<sup>4,5</sup> While The Teachers' Dignity Coalition (TDC) met with DepEd officials to discuss concerns over the supposed workload, the department was urged to lighten teacher workloads.<sup>6</sup> As an overall result of the study, workload should not be blamed for the depression of the teachers who committed suicide. There is no direct effect of the workload, though it may be a contributory factor that a teacher might end their life due to workload.

Despite the overall positive result of the study, there is significant difference between the level of workplace stress across teaching levels, educational attainment, and salary range. Digging deeper the result of the study The level of stress is higher for the teachers teaching in kindergarten, followed by the Junior and Senior levels compared to the elementary grade. It was also shown that workplace stress is lower at vocational and college levels than at any other educational level where workload is the contributing factor why stress is lower in higher educational institution than in primary and secondary level. A typical full-time instructor or professor handles 18 hours and is de-loaded by corresponding other functions such as research, and community extension,<sup>22</sup> while the teachers in the kindergarten up to the senior high school are teaching 30 hours per week with an average of 6 hours a day.

Another significant difference observed was the educational attainment, where bachelor's graduate and master's level teachers have a higher level of workplace stress compared to those who graduate with a master's degree and doctoral degree. Likewise, those earning below 20,000 have a higher level of stress compared to those who are earning 20,000 and above. The result of the study agrees with several studies that salary contributes to the level of stress of workers.<sup>29-31</sup> But, it is interesting to know from our study that those earning 50,000 and above have a higher level of depression compared to the other range.

The study also shows a significant difference between the level of workplace depression across employment type, teaching level, educational attainment, and salary range.



It is interesting that the level of depression is high for the teachers teaching in the government sector than in private institutions. It was also presented that junior and elementary grade levels are more depressed than other educators. It was also shown that workplace depression is lower at vocational and college levels than at any other educational level. Thus workload and stress may have contributing factors to the level of depression, especially among those working full time.<sup>32-34</sup> As a summary of comparison which was observed, there is a significant difference between the level of stress together with the level of depression across teaching level, educational attainment, and salary range. The study shows that teaching level, educational attainment and salary has direct effect on the stress and depression of educators, while employment type in private or government has direct effect in depression. This implies that the level of stress and depression are connected to each other and each should be managed effectively for continuous productivity.

Lastly, one limitation of this study is, a few numbers of respondents that may not represent the overall population. Based on the overall result of the study, stress and depression of teachers are connected, but as a limitation of this study, causes and direct factors are not identified.

Stress is the body's response to physical or emotional demands, and emotional stress can play a role in causing depression. A stressful situation, especially in the workload of the teachers, can trigger feelings of depression, and these feelings can make it more difficult to deal with stress. In this regards, educators around the world should manage stress and depression effectively to continuously and effectively mold students of the future.

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## CONCLUSION

Stress and depression in the workplace may be caused by personal, organizational, and social factors, which include dealing with school expectations, relationships with colleagues, and a considerable workload. Although the school day appears shorter than other jobs, it mostly comprises class interaction time, with instructors working longer hours preparing courses, studying guides, grading assignments, and organizing extracurricular activities. In conclusion of this study, the level of stress and depression is high for the teachers teaching at lower levels such as kindergarten, elementary and high school. It was also shown that workplace stress and depression are lower at vocational and college levels.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's findings have several pedagogical implications for maintaining the positive mindset of educators to have a definite attitude towards workload. Firstly, teachers must increase their awareness regarding mental health. They need to develop a mindset that mental health is essential for productivity in the workplace. Secondly, teachers also need to supplement their knowledge with spirituality which helps them become closer to the creator. Thirdly, there must also be support from the administration to avoid mental stress and excessive workload. It is recommended that the government and administrators look at possible interventions to minimize educators' levels of stress and depression.

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