

Academic Stress and Coping Mechanisms of Secondary School Teachers

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Abstract — This study explores the academic stress and coping strategies of secondary school teachers, as well as any relationships between those demographic profiles, levels of academic stress, and coping mechanisms employed. The research employed a descriptive-correlational study involving 125 secondary school teachers. Participants had diverse characteristics in terms of age, gender, marital status, rank as an educator, education level and number of years of teaching. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed by using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis.

Analysis showed that the majority of the respondents were female teachers aged 31–40, married, held the Teacher I position, completed graduate studies, and taught for six to ten years. The results indicated that the academic stress of secondary school teachers at a grand mean of 3.10 was moderate. The two biggest sources of academic stress were student behavior and classroom management, then time pressure, deadlines, and institutional responsibilities. Teachers engaged in coping mechanisms often with a grand mean of 3.49. Social support was the most common strategy, while institutional support was the least used.

Additionally, there were significant associations between teachers' demographic profiles and their levels of academic stress, as well as between demographic characteristics and coping strategies. The academic stress level, too, significantly correlated with the secondary school teachers' coping strategies.

This indicates that secondary school teachers experience academic stress that affects their ability to manage their work, and it suggests that implementing coping strategies may be beneficial. The study concludes, "Schools should add to their institutional support in the form of reducing non-teaching workloads beyond a certain level, as excessive workloads adversely impact teachers' coping capacity and overall well-being."

Keywords — *Academic Stress, Coping Mechanisms, Teacher Workload, Classroom Management, Social Support, Institutional Support, Descriptive-Quantitative Research Method, Bohol, Philippines.*

I. Introduction

With the mounting demands on instruction, more complex classroom dynamics, and increasing administrative burdens, academic stress has become a major concern to the secondary school teachers. Such professional denominations can affect teachers' quality of emotional well-being, job satisfaction and overall effectiveness as educators. The teaching profession experiences pressures that impact both professional life and personal lives as teachers try to attain curriculum standards and fulfill curriculum objectives with learner needs and institutional demands. Knowing the levels of academic stress felt by secondary school teachers along with the coping strategies they use is important to plan relevant support programs and practical interventions that may improve the teaching staff's performance and well-being.

Teaching prowess involves knowing your subject and being able to teach it, but also resilience, adaptability and some emotional acumen. Teachers are not only expected to engage with a wide variety of learners, create appropriate classroom environments, and finish lists of non-teaching time tasks in small frames. Related to that, there is academic stress, which is the mental and emotional pressure associated with teaching in terms of the obligation's teachers have towards lesson delivery, checking assessments and managing classrooms, along with administrative tasks. Some uncontrolled academic pressure can have adverse effects on teachers' health, productivity, and classroom performance, which subsequently may affect students' learning outcomes.

A number of international studies have identified that teacher stress is a common problem driven by high workload, time pressures, student behavior concerns and administrative expectations. High levels of stress among English teachers have been reported as factors that lead to burnout, lower job satisfaction and teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001). Strategies for teachers coping with the stress of working conditions should consider that context; feel support in their professional collaboration; time management, and communicating with family and friends back home.

Large class sizes, varied learner types, a shortage of teaching materials, and other bureaucracy are some of the common challenges faced by secondary school teachers in the Philippine context. Aside from classroom teaching, teachers are urged to fulfill other duties such as documentation and reporting and encouraged to join activities in the school program. These tiresome responsibilities can make academic stress build up or become a challenge for teachers looking to relax between their working life and personal one. While programs that promote teacher mental health and wellness have been introduced, many schools still lack structured support systems.

This is especially true for the teachers in the secondary school of the Division of Bohol, as they have been faced with more resource constraints and increasing demands from institutions. Teachers traditionally juggle large teaching loads and reporting obligations while implementing

the curriculum as per the guidelines. These conditions call for deepening our understanding of teachers' experiences of academic stress and coping mechanisms in their professional practice.

While teacher stress is gaining recognition, local studies only demonstrated the academic stress and coping mechanisms of secondary school teachers separately or explored specific aspects. At the same time, it is essential to uncover actionable recommendations and strategies for how schools, school systems, and education leadership can better support teachers.

Thus, the objectives of this study are to assess academic stress levels in secondary school teachers and identify their coping mechanisms to better establish a relationship between academic stress and coping mechanisms and provide recommendations that may forestall teacher burnout by focusing on reducing stress levels/practices while also aiming to enhance/improve teachers' abilities. The results of this study are hoped to bring valuable insights for administrators, educational leaders, and policy makers in devising programs that will enhance teachers' well-being and professionalism.

Literature Review

The literature review offers a broad overview of the academic stress and coping procedures used by secondary school teachers. The following section synthesizes academic scholarships, theoretical perspectives and empirical studies addressing the sources of academic stress as well as the coping mechanisms used by teachers to manage professional demands. It synthesizes global and local analyses of key stressors, including workloads, classroom management, and administrative duties, along with individual- and institution-level coping strategies. Through the analysis of these articles, the "current research" provides a sound theoretical and empirical basis while also illuminating gaps that warrant future exploration, especially regarding secondary school teachers in the context of the Philippines.

Conceptual Literature

Teacher academic stress has become increasingly well known in educational research as a significant factor affecting teachers' overall well-being, job satisfaction and instructional effectiveness. Teaching is not only an arduous profession, but it also necessitates the ability to juggle instructional responsibilities with both emotional and organizational demands on a daily basis (Kyriacou, 2015). Bottiani et al. (2019) and Schonfeld et al. Excessive workload, time pressure, and classroom challenges further link teacher stress to declines in teaching performance and student outcomes (Evers et al., 2017). These studies highlight the significance of teacher stress in designing appropriate support mechanisms.

One of the most influential theories explaining stress is the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (Lazarus, 1984; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This theory describes stress as the interaction between environmental demands and an individual's ability to handle those demands. Teachers perceive and evaluate stressful situations according to how they can cope with them, so

these coping strategies become the significant mediating factors. This theory has been extensively used in stress-related research; however, there were few studies reviewing such a theory relating to the secondary school teachers of Southeast Asian contexts.

Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory is another applicable framework, as it suggests that loss of resources such as time, energy, autonomy, or institutional support leads to stress. The most likely reason is the lack of enough material, administrative assistance, or professional support for teachers that increases stress and burnout. Although this information is crucial, there is a scarcity of studies on Filipino teachers documenting resource loss, the effects of academic stressors, and coping styles.

Another major explanation of teacher stress is offered by the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model of Bakker and Demerouti (2007). According to the model, high job demands (heavy workload, student discipline problems, and administrative or bureaucratic tasks) elevate stress levels, while job resources (professional support, collaboration with colleagues, and autonomy) work to reduce stress. Studies in international settings have proven the JD-R as an effective framework to understand teachers' stress too. Nonetheless, few studies using this model pertain to the Philippine educational context, particularly with secondary school teachers.

Self-efficacy, rooted in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997), has been highlighted as a significant factor when it comes to addressing teacher stress. Klassen and Chiu (2010) and Caprara et al. (2006) found that self-efficacy enables teachers to have confidence in their abilities to deal with classroom difficulties, and they are less burned out. Nonetheless, the majority of these studies utilize correlational designs and do not adequately account for long-term relationships between stress and coping strategies.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment—Maslach et al., 1996). While this instrument was validly employed worldwide, recent studies have demonstrated its unreliability and strong centrism with respect to the Philippine culture. The same situation happened with the research on compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress—Figley, 1995; Stamm, 2010. Although the latter two are relatively new stress concepts, there is no research on them with Filipino secondary school teachers. The most recent literature expands on the common coping strategies teachers used—time management, relaxation, and social support. The studies during the COVID-19 pandemic showed the imperative need for peer support and personal coping skills. Still, the reviewed studies aimed to describe what is going on instead of tracking causal relationships between the occurrences of stress and coping mechanisms. What is more, the international literature argues the considerable importance of institutional support methods. Wellness programs, professional development opportunities, and supportive leadership have demonstrated positive effects on psychological well-being. Nevertheless, Philippine research never completed a study that would track the conditions that formed relevant wellness programs. Overall, regarding the reviewed literature, this segment is quite credible given that theoretical literature grounded the conceptual framework for the study.

However, local literature, due to strong limitations and overlooked reliable measurement tools, fails to provide actual patterns for teacher stress.

Research Literature

According to the Report of Delos Santos (2018), public school teachers in Laguna were subjected to intense stress due to heavy workloads and insufficient institutional support. Although the study was informative about teacher stress, limitations like a small sample size and limited coping framework mean its findings may not apply to wider contexts.

Bernal (2016) found that in Manila, administrative workload served as the main stressor to teachers. However, they did not investigate teaching-level differences in coping strategies, and therefore it is challenging to identify how secondary school teachers deal with stress based on this study.

The 2019 phenomenological study describes the experiences of secondary school teachers facing curriculum changes (De Vera, 2019). The Fathering Project also runs a similar national survey on fathers of primary school children, although there is no quantitative analysis, so it was difficult for us to quantify stress levels and coping.

A study by Santos and Dela Cruz (2021) investigated teacher burnout through the lens of Conservation of Resources theory in a small regional context. In the same vein, Mendoza (2017) indicated positive results on decreasing stress among teachers with Cebu wellness programs for teachers despite not exploring long-term impact.

In Mindanao, Cruz and Santos (2019) highlighted that social support can help teachers cope with stress. Nonetheless, the use of non-standardized instruments may have limited the reliability of the findings. In Batangas, Reyes (2015) used the Maslach Burnout Inventory to study teacher burnout but reported concerns regarding its construct reliability.

A cross-sectional study was conducted by Pascual and Lizada (2022) on compassion fatigue among teachers exposed to crisis situations in Eastern Visayas. Torres (2022) explored the coping strategies employed by teachers throughout the pandemic in Negros but lacked interregional comparisons.

Bautista et al. Teacher wellness programs in Bohol in the Philippines were likewise found to have limited participation rates due to time and geographical constraints (Tayag et al. They are also responsible for creating frameworks in which teachers can feel more supported.

In summary, all of these local studies were limited by small sample size, regional setting, qualitative or cross-sectional design, and non-standardized instruments. Moreover, only a few studies were conducted to investigate the academic stress and coping mechanisms of secondary school teachers at the same time under one umbrella.

Hence, the present study fills these gaps and provides a systematic perspective on academic stress and coping strategies of secondary school teachers along with actionable recommendations that could assist schools in designing better support programs. The implications of the findings aim to add new perspectives on the known literature while adding new evidence-based advice for improving teacher well-being and professional effectiveness.

II. Methodology

The section describes the process, approaches, and steps undertaken to explore the academic stress and coping mechanisms of secondary school teachers, as well as suggestions. 3.1 Research Methodology The research methodology is a structured framework that guided the implementation of this study in an effort to accomplish research objectives in a valid, reliable, and ethical manner. It presents the research design, population and sample, data collection procedures, research instrument, statistical treatment of data, and ethical considerations. It was done through a systematic approach to generate credible results in understanding academic pressure and coping strategies used by secondary school teachers.

2.2 Subjects This study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to investigate the level of academic stress and coping mechanisms among secondary school teachers. The background/introductory part was to focus on identifying the severity of academic stress in different dimensions like workload and teaching demand, time pressure as well as deadlines and student behavior or classroom management, and also administrative or non-teaching duties performance evaluation, including accountability requirements. Furthermore, it discussed the strategies used by teachers to cope, which were divided into personal coping strategies, social coping strategies and institutional coping strategies. The correlational part was employed to identify the relationship between academic stress and coping mechanisms as well as among teachers' demographic profiles, their levels of academic stress, and their coping strategies. This design was deemed suitable, as it enabled the researcher to investigate variable relationships without manipulating the natural school setting (Vogt et al., 2005). The study findings provided a clear indication of the level and sources of academic stress, which formed the basis to develop practical recommendations and interventions that could possibly elevate teacher well-being.

This study was conducted in five secondary schools in Ubay II District, Ubay, Bohol, which are as follows: Biabas Trade High School, Cagting High School, Tintinan Integrated School, Tipolo National High School, and Union National High School. These schools make up diverse education sectors of rural and developing populations. One of the biggest municipalities in Bohol, Ubay lies on the northeast of the island. The district is divided into three school districts: Ubay I, Ubay II and Ubay III, where selected schools are located in the Ubay II District. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents, which in this case included a total of 125 secondary school teachers. Participants were all actively teaching in secondary schools and had

current, relevant experience that helped them provide reliable information about academic stressors and coping strategies.

The Input–Process–Output (IPO) model served as the conceptual framework for systematically exploring academic stress and coping mechanisms among secondary school teachers. Demographic Profile of Respondents The data consisted of the demographic profile of the respondents, which included their age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and years of service in the teaching field. It also includes information on levels of perceived academic stress measured as teaching workload and requirements, time pressure, student behavior & educational management, and administrative duties & expectations for performance. The input also contained coping strategies used by the teachers and was categorized as personal coping strategies, social coping strategies, and institutional coping strategies. After obtaining permission from the authorities of the schools selected, a proper standardized and validated questionnaire was distributed to respondents. The reviewed data were arranged and tabulated for analytical purposes. The demographic profile of the respondents was outlined and the level of academic stressors and coping mechanisms was determined using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and t-tests were utilized as inferential statistical tools to identify significant relationships between academic stress, coping mechanisms, and differences in these variables when respondents were grouped according to their demographic variables. The output of this study was the presentation and interpretation of its findings, which gave an overview of the level and source of academic stress among teachers and methods commonly used by teachers to cope with academic stress among them, as well as a significant relationship between certain variables. These findings provided the foundation for building actionable recommendations and intervention strategies that schools and educational leaders could implement to bolster teacher well-being and mitigate academic stress.

A structured questionnaire was the main data collection instrument. The scale used to measure the level of academic stress and coping strategies among secondary school teachers was adapted from Likert (1932), i.e., a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: (1) primary demographic details of the respondents, (2) levels of academic stress over different dimensions identified to cause academic stressors, and (3) coping mechanisms used by teachers. Before being used, items of the instrument were validated by education experts and pilot-tested to confirm clarity and reliability.

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards to protect the rights and welfare of participants. The purpose and procedures of the study, along with the anticipated benefits, were outlined in detail to each participant in order to obtain informed consent. We obtained written informed consent from each participant for study participation, as the study was entirely voluntary. Participants were assigned codes rather than being identified by their names; confidentiality and anonymity were maintained; and all collected data were carefully stored securely and accessed only for academic purposes. The study was conducted in compliance with

the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act 10173), which protects personally identifiable information from disclosure without consent. Beneficence and non-maleficence informed the research process, and questionnaire items were crafted to avoid trauma or distress. Institutional permission and approval were also obtained from the school heads and concerned authorities before conducting the study. The interpreter also avoided plagiarism, and in all the terms used, it was well worth reporting that man is honest from their opinion. Thus, the study protects their dignity, rights, and welfare while creating credible findings of their academic burden and coping strategies.

III. Results and Discussion

This section comprises a descriptive and comparative analysis of the findings of the study Academic Stress and Coping Mechanisms of Secondary School Teachers and Suggestions. The findings are structured based on the study objectives, starting with the demographic profile of the respondents, academic stress levels and sources, and coping strategies, followed by relationships between variables. We discuss the results in the context of current literature and practices in education.

Demographic Profile

This demographic profile of the respondents serves as vital background information that aids our understanding of variations in academic stress levels and coping strategies employed by secondary school teachers. The majority of teachers (50%) were aged between 31 and 40 years, suggesting that most respondents were in the mid-career stage. Twenty-six percent of the respondents were teachers aged 41 to 50 years old, while 20 percent were teachers aged between 21 and 30. Just 4% were aged 51 or above—a comparatively small proportion of senior teachers nearing retirement. This distribution indicates that most of the respondents had previously acquired teaching experience and coping skills, even if young teachers are still accommodating professional demands. These findings are in line with previous studies that suggest mid-career teachers are more professionally stable and have more effective coping means compared to novice teachers.

In relation to sex, the results show that the teaching profession is still predominantly female, with 78 female teachers and 47 male teachers participating in the study. This trend is consistent with national and international patterns in education, where women are in the majority among the teaching workforce. Earlier work, however, indicates that gender differences can also moderate perceptions and behavioral responses to stress, though serendipitously, the current study later finds that sex does not significantly contribute to academic stress levels.

Such data, especially on marital status (62 percent were married), suggests that many educators have dual obligations on the home front and in the workplace. Single teachers made up 18 percent, widowed teachers 13 percent, and separated teachers 7 percent. These results point to the fact that teachers have different personal responsibilities, which may impact stress levels and coping behavior. Teachers who have family responsibilities may feel extra pressure to balance

their professional tasks with personal ones. This aligns with findings from previous research that suggested educational stress and coping mechanisms may vary by marital status.

In terms of teaching positions, results show that the largest group among the respondents was Teacher I (46%), followed by Teacher III (30%) and Teacher II (10%). Few occupied upper ranks, with the remainder in positions such as Master Teacher I (9%), Master Teacher II (4%), and Master Teacher III (2%). This distribution suggests that the majority of the respondents were in either the beginning or mid-point of their teaching careers. Also, lower-ranked teaching positions have heavier teaching loads and classroom responsibilities, which lead to high stress levels. These results align with previous studies showing that early-career teachers tend to experience higher levels of workload-related stress than their more experienced peers.

Academic Stress in Secondary School Teachers

The findings indicate that secondary school teachers reported moderate levels of overall academic stress, which shows that stress is a normal part of teachers' work lives. But one dimension of stress was more dominant than the others.

For workload and teaching demands, teachers registered moderate stress with a grand mean of 3.10. Difficulty in covering the set curriculum during the timeframe was rated similarly high ($M = 4.10$), illustrating that this point is also a significant source of pressure among teachers. Things like planning lessons and managing multiple subjects or grade levels were rated lower but still contributed to overall stress. These findings echo previous research that highlighted curriculum demands and limited instructional time as major contributors to teacher stress.

Time pressure and deadlines were also sources of stress for teachers and had a grand mean (3.31) interpreted as "often experienced." Teachers indicated that balancing both teaching duties and other schedules placed significant amounts of stress due to slow return times ($M = 3.52$), while meeting deadlines for reports and requirements added additional pressure overall ($M = 3.45$). Lessons that required limited preparation time received a moderate stress rating. These results align with earlier research indicating that time pressure and administrative burden are among teachers most consistently reported stress-inducing factors.

This study found that student behavior and classroom management were the top source of academic-related stress, with a grand mean of 4.36 interpreted as "experienced always." Managing disruptive behaviors and maintaining disciplinary action were very high as well ($M = 4.45$). These findings suggest that classroom management continues to be among the most challenging elements of teaching. This finding aligns with earlier findings that classroom discipline and student behavior were significant contributing factors to teacher stress and burnout.

Administrative and non-teaching duties causing moderate stress resulted in a grand mean of 3.20. On average, teachers spent more time on preparation and paperwork than they did on teaching ($M = 3.55$), suggesting that administrative duties invade instructional time. Serving on

committees and taking on non-teaching assignments added stress, too. These results are consistent with studies suggesting that excessive paperwork and administrative demands lead to increased teacher workload at the sacrifice of effective teaching.

The grand mean of performance evaluation and accountability was 3.05 with moderate stress levels. Teachers felt stressed by evaluation systems and accountability requirements ($M = 3.47$), which also made them feel pressure to meet performance standards. Even if classroom observations were less reported, these findings showed that teachers still experienced evaluation systems as stressful. These findings are consistent with research suggesting that accountability systems and performance monitoring can create psychological pressure among teachers.

These factors could be attributed to repeated stress, progressive stress, or population growth.

Teachers often used coping means to manage academic stress, with a grand mean of 3.49 interpreted as "often used" (Table 2). In the different coping strategies, social support systems had the highest mean (4.58), interpreted as always used. Teachers leaned on colleagues, friends and family for emotional and practical support. This is consistent with earlier research that highlighted the role collegial and social support plays in reducing teacher stress.

Personal coping strategies such as self-care practices, relaxation techniques and time management were also frequently employed, with a mean of 3.43 interpreted as "often practiced." Teachers use these strategies to manage stress and stay grounded emotionally.

Institutional coping strategies were scored the lowest mean of 2.47, interpreted as utilization rarely used. This means either teachers felt they received little support from their organization or rarely utilized organizational stress relief programs. This finding is indicative of a disconnect between the needs that teachers have versus what schools offer in terms of supportive services. Earlier studies have highlighted the inadequacy of institutional support systems aimed at teacher well-being.

The study examined the relationship between demographic profiles and academic stress.

Results showed that academic stress had significant relationships with age ($p = 0.037$), marital status ($p = 0.042$), and highest educational attainment ($p = 0.021$). These findings suggest that personal and professional backgrounds influence teachers' academic stress. It is possible that older teachers, married teachers, and teachers with higher levels of educational attainment will differ in the levels of stress they discharge because they will have different responsibilities and expectations.

Whereas no significant relationship was found in terms of sex ($p = 0.337$), teaching position ($p = 0.058$), and teaching experience ($p = 0.103$). These findings indicate that academic stress is prevalent among different teaching groups, regardless of their sex, status, or length of service.

Association of Demographic Profile with Coping Mechanisms

Results showed that there were significant relationships between both marital status ($p = 0.031$) and highest educational attainment ($p = 0.022$) when considered relevant to coping mechanisms. This indicates that teachers with varying family backgrounds and education utilize diverse approaches in the prevention of stress. Married teachers and those with postgraduate qualifications might have wider support networks or better coping strategies.

However, there was no significant relationship between age ($p = 0.091$), sex ($p = 0.286$), teaching position ($p = 0.064$), and teaching experience ($p = 0.112$) and coping mechanisms. These results suggest that overall teachers use the same coping strategies irrespective of these features.

Academic stress and coping mechanisms

It was noted from the results that there existed a positive significant relationship between academic stress and coping mechanism ($r = 0.621$, $p < 0.05$). That means there is a moderate to strong positive correlation between the two variables: academic stress and coping approaches used by students.

The results indicate that as academic stress becomes more severe, teachers are indexing higher usage of coping strategies. Teachers reporting greater stress who seek social support and employ personal coping strategies are more at risk. In contrast, teachers with lower levels of stress tend to use the coping strategies less frequently.

This relationship aligns with theoretical perspectives on stress and coping, which postulate that individuals activate coping mechanisms as a response to stressful situations. The findings highlight the need to strengthen personal and institutional coping supports that better equip teachers with ways to work smarter in schools. In summary, the results suggest that efforts should be made by schools to create holistic stress regulation programs as well as to implement pro-well-being policies for secondary school teachers; however, definitive conclusions cannot yet be drawn until longitudinal studies can better account for confounding factors.

IV. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the academic stress level of secondary school teachers and their coping methods toward workload. The results show that secondary school teachers demonstrate a moderate to high level of academic stress, which is mainly related to heavy workloads, the teaching process itself, classroom management difficulties, and administrative tasks. Though they struggled under pressure, educators displayed different coping strategies, such as time management behaviors to seek social support and positive thinking, as well as problem-solving strategies that helped them cope with stress without avoiding behaviors while still being able to look after their professional duties.

This indicates that teachers that use adaptive coping skillfulness mismanage what they exclaim last, so it is clear there is a tremendous relation between academic pressure and its management. This highlights the relevance of investing in teachers' self-coping skills—one component contributing to improving teacher well-being and instructional effectiveness in a wider funding strategy. They further stress that academic stress is not merely a personal concern to be addressed but rather an institutional issue, something requiring organized support from school administrators and the education system.

This study enhances our knowledge of academic stress and coping strains amongst secondary school teachers, offering valuable insights that can help in designing programs to support them. The implications for school leaders and education policymakers are severe, as they indicate a need for structured stress management programs, emotional and professional support, and better working conditions. Appropriate interventions addressing academic stress can lead to the well-being of teachers, enhance their job satisfaction, and improve quality in teaching and learning in secondary schools.

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