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Research Article

Filipino Teachers' Mental Health Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the problems that adversely affect the mental health of Filipino teachers during the time of Covid-19 pandemic. The results of the study revealed various ways teachers cope with their problems on mental health. Family and other forms of social support, recreational, and spiritual activities have always been beneficial in these challenging times and a lot of studies has proved its effectiveness on dealing with mental health. However, aside from these coping strategies, teachers have proven themselves to be flexible enough to find ways for them to feel much better. The study also proves that teachers are resilient in dealing with their problems. They acknowledged their difficulties, yet they also manage and divert their focus into something more positive and productive. It is also noteworthy that teachers are less likely to experience pandemic fatigue since they always try to be obedient with the safety precautions mandated by the government considering that it is for their own sake. It is recommended that teachers who are about to return to face-to-face classes or onsite reporting be subjected to counseling before they go back to pre-pandemic work set-up so that the delivery of quality education will be ensured as we gradually accept the new normal in the field of education.

Keywords: lockdown, mental health, pandemic, teacher

Introduction

The Philippines has been greatly affected by the persistent and prevalent transmission of the coronavirus. Apart from the noticeable risks to physical health, the psychological impact of COVID-19 also carries substantial threats to mental health as it increases the levels of

anxiety and stress of people who are heavily affected by the pandemic. Recently, there has been a growing interest in the effect of pandemic on the mental health of teachers. Apart from the possible stress teachers face concerning the threat of COVID-19 to themselves and their families, they are required to have a

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transition into the new normal setting and undertake effective remedial intervention (Guillasper et al., 2020; Moralista & Oducado, 2020). Teachers may not necessarily have the gadget and equipment, resources, and technological skills and competencies that they need to engage and succeed in this new modality of teaching.

In a webinar broadcast, Dr. Carolina Uno-Rayco, national executive director of the Philippine Mental Health Association, explained that teachers were coping with mental disorders in different ways. A grade school public teacher lamented that teachers had to deal with personal struggles at home on top of their stressful duties and responsibilities at work. They cannot communicate their battles and sentiments because they are expected to always be resilient because their family, students, and community depend on them. People may think that teachers are doing well and having the best days of their lives because of the work-from-home setup. But they also have their own fears and anxieties. Apart from being classroom teachers at home, they are also wives, mothers, husbands who play significant functions and duties in their families (Ramos, 2020).

DepEd Commons Projects aim to secure the continuity of adherence to the stakeholders, particularly directed to the teachers and the students to the educational and preventive policies such as the provision of alternative delivery modes of education and quarantine requirements in the new normal setting (Department of Education, 2020). This serves as an online platform for virtual lessons that teachers and even students nationwide can use as an alternative, but this is still on its trial stage and is not obligatory. These new normal can cause anxiety among the teachers since they have not been trained for emergency online teaching (Talidong & Toquero, 2020).

Literature Review

Mental Health

According to the findings of The National Education Association, 28% of educators thought the pandemic made them more likely to leave the teaching profession. A study from Louisiana reported early childhood educators' mental health last spring, concludes that rates

of depression almost doubled, with more than a third of those educators indicating depressive symptoms. In a survey from August to September by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, most teachers have been revealed to work longer hours, and only 25% said their school offered adequate support for mental health (Luthra, 2021).

A study of more than 10,000 teachers revealed that 92.8% of educational professionals suffered emotional exhaustion, stress, anguish, or anxiety due to confinement and distance education. Unnecessary administrative responsibilities, unclear instructions, absence of sustenance in teleworking, and lack of technical means were the main problems pointed out by teachers. Possible difficulties facing such policies include poor online teaching infrastructure, lack of teacher training, information gap, and complex home environment (Zhang et al., 2020).

The current educational paradigm shift due to COVID-19 showed that hundreds of Illinois teachers worn out from "pandemic fatigue" are on the verge of quitting. According to a survey of some 1,300 teachers statewide, because of the stress and safety concerns caused by teaching amid the pandemic, one out of three teachers said that COVID-related stress had caused them to contemplate switching professions or retiring, something that state data show is already occurring at an alarming rate in five years. Hundreds more teachers have already retired this year as compared to what happened in 2019. Finally, 76% of teachers said their workload is heavier this year than in 2019 (Chicago Sun Times, 2020).

A cross-sectional study in secondary school teachers in Greece found that 34% of teachers were feeling anxious and very anxious during the pandemic, while only 8 % of teachers exhibit severe depressive emotions. Female gender was found to have a positive correlation to feelings of fear, depression, and a negative correlation to optimism (Stachteas & Stachteas, 2020).

These studies have emphasized the effect of COVID-19 pandemic to teachers and its significant impact on their mental health. This study intended to focus on the issues surrounding mental health among Filipino teachers in elementary, high school, and college/university.

This investigation aimed to contribute to the ongoing concerns among schools and other stakeholders who will surely find results from this survey useful in crafting programs, interventions, and assistance to Filipino teachers as they continue to carry out their duties amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to specifically answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of Filipino teacher respondents?
2. What are the mental and emotional conditions of teachers during the pandemic?
3. What are the different coping mechanisms employed by teachers to deal with problems caused by the pandemic?

Theoretical Framework

Bakker and Demerouti (2007) proposed a model by which job demands and resources can be identified in various contexts in terms of their effects on teacher stress and burnout which is an important consideration during a pandemic. In the job resources-demands model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), job demands are understood to be fluid and job resources are understood to include both contextual resources provided by employers (e.g., supportive leaders) as well as personal resources such as teacher efficacy and self-care practices. As such, this model affords the flexibility for application even in unusual contexts such as a pandemic (Sokal, Eblie, Trudel & Babb, 2020).

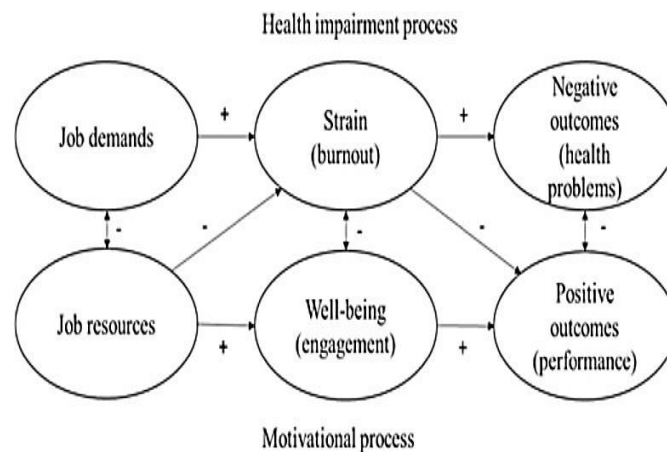


Figure 1. The dual process model JD-R framework (Schaufeli & Taris 2014)

The JD-R framework (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Demerouti et al. 2001; Fig. 1) posits that job characteristics can be classified as either job demands or job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job demands (e.g., high workload, demanding interactions with clients or customers) refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and are thus associated with physiological and/or psychological costs like ill health and burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001). As such, job demands are the most important predictors of emotional exhaustion which is the central dimension of the burnout syndrome defined as extreme fatigue (Demerouti et al., 2003). On the other hand, job resources (e.g.,

procedural fairness, social support from colleagues/supervisors, team cohesion) have been defined as those physical, mental, social, or organizational job characteristics that are functional in attaining work goals, support in reducing job demands and associated physiological and/or psychological costs and stimulate personal growth and development (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Accordingly, job resources are the most important predictors of motivation and work engagement, i.e., work-related well-being (Bakker et al., 2007). All job characteristics can be modeled as either job demands or job resources in all kinds of working environments (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). This flexibility makes the JD-R framework both unique and popular. The JD-

R framework further assumes that job demands, and job resources trigger two relatively independent processes, a health impairment process, and a motivational process (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). While the health impairment process consists of job demands as the most important predictors of outcomes like strain, emotional exhaustion, and health problems, the motivational process describes job resources as crucial predictors of motivation or work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti 2007). Furthermore, the JD-R framework posits a direct link between job resources and burnout, but no (or merely a weak) relation between job demands and work engagement (Schaufeli and Taris 2014).

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive research design which investigated the mental health problems of the respondents, attitude of senior high school students in help-seeking, and their perception of telepsychology. In this type of design, the researcher seeks to describe the status of an identified variable and to provide systematic information about a phenomenon.

Participants

The 134 participants are different Filipino teachers from different levels, i.e., elementary, high school, college or university both coming from public and private schools nationwide. The respondents age ranges from 20-years-old and above.

Data Gathering Procedure

The participants are the Filipino teachers who are currently teaching both from public and private school in different levels nationwide. The researcher asked the consent of the respondents and write down the inclusion criteria and the purpose of the study through Google Forms. If they participate voluntarily, the researcher asked them to complete the Filipino Teachers' Mental Health during the Pandemic.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using mean percentage a descriptive statistical treatment to interpret the teacher's responses.

Interpretation of Data

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Filipino Teachers: Sex (Gender)
N = 137

Sex (Gender)	Participants
Male	30
Female	107

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Filipino Teacher: Age
N = 137

Age	Participants
20 – 30 Years Old	35
31 – 40 Years Old	32
41 – 50 Years Old	44
50 – and above	26

Table 1 shows that 30 respondents are male teachers while 107 were females. Most of the participants are female teachers.

Table 2 shows that 35 respondents are age between 20-30 years old, while 32 were from

31-40 years old, 44 belongs to 41-50 years old participants and 26 teachers are 50 and above. Most of the participants are age 41 - 50 years old.

Table 3. Demographic Profile of Filipino Teachers: Teaching Service
N=137

No. of Years in the Teaching Service	Participants
Less than a Years	3
1 – 3 Years	21
4 – 6 Years	22
7 – 10 Years	23
Above 10 Years	68

Table 3 shows 3 participants has less than a year experience, while 21 of them has 1 to 3 years teaching experience, 22 teachers has at least 4 to 6 years teaching service, 23 respondents have 7 to 10 years of experience

and 28 already acquired 10 years and above experience in teaching profession. Almost half of the participants are in the education industry for more than 10 years.

Table 4. Demographic Profile of Filipino Teachers: Teaching Assignment
N=137

Teaching Assignment	Participants
Elementary	60
High School	65
College	12

Table 4 shows that 60 teacher respondents are currently working in elementary level while 65 are secondary level and 12 are teaching in tertiary level at the time of the

study. Most of the participants are currently working in the High School Department. Other participants however are teaching in Senior High School and Special Education Program.

Table 5. Demographic Profile of Filipino Teachers: Region
N= 137

Region	Participants
Region I – Ilocos Region	1
Region II – Cagayan Valley	0
Region III – Central Luzon	14
Region IVA – CALABARZON	21
Region V – Bicol Region	4
Region VI – Western Visayas	0
Region VII – Central Visayas	1
Region VIII – Eastern Visayas	0
Region IX – Zamboanga Peninsula	1
Region X – Northern Mindanao	0
Region XI – Davao Region	0
Region XII – SOCCSKSARGEN	4
Region XIII – Caraga	0
NCR – National Capital Region	91
CAR – Cordillera Administrative Region	0
ARMM – Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	0

Table 5 shows that there is 1 respondent from Region 1- Ilocos Region, while 14 are from

Region III - Central Luzon, 21 from Region IVA – CALABARZON, 4 from Region V - Bicol Region,

both 1 teacher are from Region VII - Central Visayas and Region IX - Zamboanga Peninsula, 4 from Region XII – SOCCSKSARGEN, and 91 are from the NCR - National Capital Region. On the other hand, there are no participants from Region II - Cagayan Valley, Region VI - Western Visayas, Region VIII - Eastern Visayas, Region X

- Northern Mindanao, Region XI - Davao Region, Region XIII – Caraga, CAR - Cordillera Administrative Region and ARMM – Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Based on the data given, most of the teachers are from NCR - National Capital Region.

Table 6. Unpleasant thoughts and/or feelings during the Pandemic

	Yes	No
Worry (uncertainty, anxiety, fear)	110	24
Sadness (loneliness, depressed)	80	55
Frustration (hopelessness, negativity)	72	62
Inept (incompetent, powerless)	60	74

Table 6 shows that 110 teachers are worried, 80 among them are sad, while 72 teachers feel frustrated. However, on the other hand 74 teachers do not feel incompetent. Among those answers that are not listed on the options are stress, adjustment to new platforms of teaching, vulnerability, unpleasant

thoughts about health problems, uneasiness, worry for the education of my children, anger, sickness, boredom, disappointment and annoyance, pressure from work, COVID patient, sudden loss of loved one and overthinking. Based on the gathered data, most of the teachers are worried.

Table 7. Duration of Unpleasant thoughts and/or feelings

Duration	Percentage
Less than a Month	65
1 – 2 Months	26
3 – 6 Months	26
More than 6 Months	20

Table 7 shows that 65 teachers experienced unpleasant thoughts and/or feelings in just less than a month of the implementation of the quarantine while 26 felt this from 1 to 2 months alone, 26 in between of 3 to 6 months and 20 of

the teachers have unpleasant thoughts and/or feelings that last more than 6 months. While teachers might experience negativities, most of them endure it in less than a month.

Table 8. Existing unpleasant thoughts and/or feelings

	Percentage
Still Existing	30
Not Anymore	60
Somehow	47
I don't know	0

Table 8 suggests that 30 teachers agreed that they are still experiencing unpleasant condition within the last month, 60 are confident that they do not have the same

thoughts and/or feelings as before, 47 are somehow experiencing the existing circumstances and none of them are not sure.

Table 9. Other symptoms along with the unpleasant condition
N=134

	Yes	No
Sudden change in eating pattern (loss or gain appetite)	57	78
Disruptive sleeping pattern (sleeplessness or oversleeping)	87	48
Unstable emotional behavior (over-reactive or apathetic)	58	77
Concentration or Focus issues (cannot complete a task quickly and accurately)	64	70
Difficulty in dealing with relationship or interpersonal issues (with immediate family, relatives, friends, etc.)	42	92
Information and/or communication fatigue (Avoiding know more or communicate more, Deactivating Sosial Media Account, Avoiding media and other source of information)	53	81

Table 9 shows that 78 teachers do not experience sudden change in eating pattern (loss or gain of appetite), 87 teachers agreed that they have disruptive sleeping pattern (sleeplessness or oversleeping), 77 teachers do not have unstable emotional behavior (over-reactive or apathetic), 92 of them disagree to have difficulty in dealing with relationship or interpersonal issues and 81 teachers do not

have information and/or communication fatigue. Among the other symptoms along with the unpleasant condition, most teachers agreed to have disruptive sleeping pattern (sleeplessness or oversleeping). Among the other symptoms teacher experienced are shift to online gaming, painting, and music, news frustration and trauma.

Table 10. Work-related Factors causing Mental and Emotional Challenges
N=134

	Definitely Yes	Possible to some extent	I don't think so
Limited technical resources (technology, devices, connectivity, etc.)	36	63	35
Too much workload being imposed by the school (new forms, new guidelines, new tasks, and new responsibilities)	67	51	16
Lack in competency in doing remote/online teaching (pedagogical skills in eLearning, ICT skills, etc.)	29	59	48
Many students are not cooperating well in the new setup of education	55	55	24
Lack of support from the school management (provisions and	21	47	66

Table 11. Personal and/or Family-Related Factors causing Mental and Emotional Challenges
N=134

	Definitely Yes	Possible to some extent	I don't think so
Health and Safety Matters	56	58	21
Financial Concerns	42	63	31
Household Responsibilities	37	57	41
Family Problem (spouse, kids, parents, relatives)	26	58	51

Table 10 suggests that 63 teachers have possible limited technical resources, 67 of them agree on too much workload being imposed by the school, 59 teachers possibly lack competency and skills in doing remote/online teaching. In addition, there are 55 teachers whose students are not cooperating well in the new set up of education and 66 teachers are unsure whether they experience lack of support from the school management.

Table 11 shows that 58 teachers are possibly considering health and safety matters causing mental and emotional challenges while 63

of them are possibly concern with their financial security, 57 teachers have the possibility to consider household responsibilities and 58 of them has possible family problem with their spouse, kids, parents and/or relatives. Among the personal and/or family-related factors causing Mental and Emotional Challenges, financial concerns are the most chosen possibility. On the other hand, participants also consider these factors: loss of loved ones, internet connectivity, family distance and co-teachers.

*Table 12. Job Factor Affecting Work Performance
N=134*

	Yes	No	To some extent
Preparation of lessons and learning materials for my classes	37	57	37
Doing actual class (online/remote)	33	62	37
Submission of paper works or school documents (form, records, etc.)	46	47	38
Attendance and participation in meetings	26	81	25
Participation and engagement in school activities	33	69	29
Doing consultation with my students	34	62	36

Table 12 shows that 57 teachers disagree that preparation of lessons and learning materials for classes affect their work performances, 62 teachers disagree that doing actual class (online/remote) also do not cause unpleasant condition, 47 teachers also disagree that submission of paper works or school documents affect teaching performances, 81 teachers attests that attendance and participation in meetings has no significant effect on work performance, 69 teachers

answered no when ask if participation and engagement in school activities affect their job as a teacher, and 62 teachers disagree that doing consultation with their students distresses their work performances. Student factor, they have no good internet connectivity and follow-up students were among those other performance aspects affected by this/these unpleasant conditions, that are not included in the options.

Table 13. Coping Mechanisms of Teachers

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Do you feel too tired even when you are not physically doing anything?	17	40	55	17	6
Do you feel worried or anxious about many things?	27	27	45	27	11
Do you think that things will go worse and that there is little hope coming in the near future?	22	17	35	30	30
Do you think of positive ways on how to address your unpleasant situation?	65	41	18	8	2

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Do you do something productive that distract you from unpleasant thought and feelings?	66	40	20	6	3
Do you share your thoughts and feelings to other	61	31	30	11	1

Table 13 shows that 55 teachers sometimes feel too tired even when they are not physically doing anything, while 45 teachers sometimes feel worried or anxious about many things, 35 teachers sometimes things will go worse and that there is little hope coming in the near future, 65 teachers always think of positive ways on how to address your unpleasant situation, 66 teachers always do something

productive that distract them from unpleasant thoughts and feelings and 61 teachers share their thoughts and feelings to others. Most of the teachers always thinks of positive ways, do something productive and share their thoughts and feelings to others when asked about reflection toward how they feel, their way of thinking, and actions in the last 4 weeks.

Table 14. *Coping Mechanism of Teachers when Faced with npleasant condition/s*
N=134

	Yes	No	I intend to...
Consulted expert for professional help (counselor, therapist, doctor, etc.)	14	101	18
Relied on the support of my immediate family	104	21	9
Engaged into activities that distract from entertaining negative thought or feelings.	111	12	10
Sought support from my colleagues and friends	92	26	17
Do some self-help techniques (e.g., yoga, meditation, etc.) which I learned from my readings	84	29	22
Read or watched a lot of inspirational materials	99	23	12

Table 14 shows that 101 teachers did not consult experts for professional help. Data also showed that 104 of them relied on the support of their immediate family, 111 teachers engaged into activities that distract them from entertaining negative thoughts or feelings, 92 teachers sought support from their colleagues and friends, 84 teachers do some self-help techniques which they learned from their readings and 99 teachers read or watched a lot of inspirational materials when faced with unpleasant conditions. On the other hand, teachers also consider the following therapeutic activities: Bible study and support system, lots of prayer and parish involvement, Bible reading and mind setting, working harder, biking and motorcycle riding, online games, watching old films, playing musical instruments, videoke, bonding with family, resting, time management, and planting.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study investigated the problems that adversely affect the mental health of Filipino teachers on different levels. Based on the research findings, most of the participants are female teachers with the age between 41 - 50 years old. Almost half of them is in the education industry for more than 10 years in the public sector, currently working in the High School Department and from the NCR - National Capital Region. During the pandemic, most of the participants admit that they feel worried (uncertainty, anxiety, fear). Consistent with previous cross-sectional study, teachers were feeling anxious to very anxious during the pandemic. Surprisingly, the female gender was found to have a positive correlation to feelings of fear and depression as described in the study of Stachteas and Stachteas (2020). However, teachers are confident that they do not have the

same thoughts and/or feelings as before and they endure the unpleasant conditions in less than a month. On the other hand, they experienced disruptive sleeping patterns (sleeplessness or oversleeping) probably due to too much workload being imposed in the school and sometimes issues of financial concerns. They also disagree that work-related factors such as preparation of lessons and learning materials for their classes, doing actual class, submission of paper works or school documents, attendance and participation in meetings, participation and engagement in school activities, doing consultation with their students caused them mental and emotional challenges during the pandemic. Most of the teachers always think of positive ways to do something productive and share their thoughts and feelings to others when asked about reflecting toward their feelings, thinking, and actions in the last 4 weeks. When faced with unpleasant conditions, teachers did not consult experts for professional help. Instead, they relied on the support of their immediate family, engaged into activities that distract them from entertaining negative thoughts or feelings, sought support from their colleagues and friends, do some self-help techniques and read or watched a lot of inspirational materials. Research supports positive effects of recreation activities such as increased social support, control, choice, relaxation, and a diversion from stressful situations (Rethorst et. al, 2009).

Limitations

The study only focuses on the mental health of teachers. However, future researchers may try to focus on the motivation and persistence intention towards online instruction among Filipino teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the coping mechanisms found to be effective by the participants were spiritual and recreational activities such as biking and growing plants. The researcher recommended to have a program with the aforementioned activities in line with the Department of Education initiative in providing proactive Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services to teachers.

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