

Mental Health of Public School Teachers in Davao De Oro

ABSTRACT

Aims: The present investigation aims to determine the mental health status of public school teachers post-pandemic. This study seeks to provide descriptive results on the depression, anxiety, and stress scale of the respondents.

Study Design: The study employed a quantitative survey design.

Methodology: A total of 175 public school teachers responded to the survey. This utilized the DASS-21. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation, ANOVA, and T-test.

Results: The findings revealed that 58.29% of respondents are female, 34.86% are between 31 to 35 years old, and 41.71% have been in service for 6 to 10 years. At the time of this study, 45.71% of the respondents are currently enrolled in graduate studies. The status of their mental health was as follows: stress scale (20), depression scale (13), and anxiety (9) interpreted as moderate, mild, and mild, respectively. Also, there is a significant difference in the statuses of respondents' mental health when grouped according to years in service, age, and gender.

Conclusion: The study concluded that public school teachers are experiencing mild symptoms of anxiety and depression and moderate stress levels. This entails that there remains room for improving current efforts to rally contextualized efforts to improve the mental health status of teachers.

Keywords: mental health status, teachers, DASS-21, descriptive

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an essential aspect of overall well-being that empowers individuals to navigate the challenges of daily life, recognize their potential, learn effectively, and contribute to their communities (WHO, 2022). Teachers are at the forefront of delivering education, services, and skills to students in schools, thus critical players in shaping their students' academic achievements and growth. Yet, in recent times, the demands and obligations placed on teachers have increased significantly, posing a significant threat to their mental health and well-being and ultimately impacting the academic outcomes of students (KARAP & Inaltekin, 2022). Hence, understanding teachers' mental health has become more pressing than ever. This issue can have far-reaching implications for the quality of education and the well-being of teachers and students alike.

Further, teachers' mental health has become a pressing global issue, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. New Orleans and beyond teachers have reported increased pressure and a decline in mental well-being, leading to difficulties coping with their jobs and effectively teaching their students (Baker et al., 2021). Studies have revealed a significant rise in stress, burnout, and technostress among educators during the pandemic (Pellerone, 2021; Penado-Abilleira et al., 2021). Both university and non-university teachers have experienced moderate to low levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (von der Embse et al., 2019;

Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021), with non-university teachers facing additional challenges such as scarce resources, organizational justice issues, interpersonal conflicts, role confusion, work overload, uncertainty management, psychosomatic disorders, and burnout in their workplaces (von der Embse et al., 2019; Prado-Gascó et al., 2020). These findings indicate a critical need to prioritize teachers' mental health and well-being worldwide, as they play a vital role in shaping the future of our society.

In the Philippines, teachers' mental health has become a pressing national issue as the workload and pressure experienced by public school teachers have reached unsustainable levels (Jimenez, 2021). Former DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones has noted that government workers, including teachers, are overworked and under tremendous stress (Terrazola, 2018). This has negatively impacted the development of teachers' learning resources, as their mental well-being is significantly compromised (Jimenez, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this situation, as teachers face additional stressors, such as adjusting to the new normal in education and providing efficient remedial instruction (Guillasper et al., 2020; Moralista & Oducado, 2020). This situation has become a cause for concern, as it affects not only the mental health of teachers but also the quality of education they can provide to their students. Urgent measures are needed to address this issue and support our educators to ensure they can provide the best possible education for our youth.

According to a report by Casamayor (2019) in the Davao Region, there has been suicide among teachers, which have been attributed to depression likely caused by excessive workload and pressure from numerous requirements. Despite returning to normalcy after the pandemic, teachers still struggle with balancing their work and personal lives, leading to elevated stress levels and burnout. Such high levels of burnout could potentially result in an increase in teacher turnover rates in the future (Kotowski, Davis, & Barratt, 2022), further exacerbating the existing mental health problems teachers face in the local community face. Moreover, despite the extent of the issue on the mental health of public teachers, there is a sparse of local studies intended to describe the mental health of teachers, particularly in Davao Region.

Taken together, the researcher sought to conduct this descriptive study on the current mental health status of public school teachers in the province. This study's findings can help identify the prevalence of mental health problems in the chosen sample. Lastly, the study could offer insightful data that guide practice and policy, thereby improving teachers' mental health.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the mental health of public school teachers. Specifically, this research sought:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Gender;
 - 1.2 Age;
 - 1.2 Years in Service;
 - 1.3 Educational Attainment?
2. What is the status of the mental health of public school teachers in terms of:
 - 3.1 Depression;
 - 3.2 Anxiety; and,
 - 3.3. Stress?
3. Is there a significant difference in the mental health status of public-school teachers when analyzed based on profile?

METHODOLOGY

Design

In conducting this study, the researcher employed a quantitative survey design. This is an appropriate approach to the study, which allowed the researcher to provide numerical results describing the respondents' mental health.

Participants

The participants of this study were public school teachers employed in Davao De Oro. A total of 175 public school teachers responded to the survey. The following were the inclusion criteria that were used for the selection of the respondents (1) the respondent must be a public-school teacher in one of the secondary schools in Davao De Oro; (2) the respondent must be a licensed teacher; (3) the respondent taught at the mentioned province for at least six months at the time that the study was conducted; and, (4) the respondent was willing to participate in the study.

Research Instruments

The survey questionnaire is composed of two parts. The first part included the information where respondents tick boxes corresponding to their profile. The second phase included the questionnaire of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales - Short Form (DASS-21) crafted by Lovibond S. and Lovibond F. It is a valid and reliable 21-item questionnaire divided into its three domains, depression (Items 3, 5, 10, 13, 16, 17, 21), anxiety (Items 2, 4, 7, 9, 15, 19, 20), and stress (Items 1, 6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 18). Regarding reliability, Cronbach's alpha for the DASS-21 was 0.94 for Depression, 0.87 for Anxiety, and 0.91 for Stress. Scores are summed up, and the total scale is multiplied by two and interpreted using the following:

Data Treatment and Analysis

The findings came from analyzing the numerical data gathered through a survey questionnaire. Appropriate statistical tools are used to analyze the gathered data. Frequency and percentage are utilized to determine the profile of the respondents. Mean and the standard deviation is used to calculate the level of mental health of public school teachers. One-way analysis of variance is used to calculate the difference in the level of mental health when analyzed according to the age, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment of respondents. ANOVA and Independent Samples t-test is used to analyze the significant difference in mental health regarding gender.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 shows that 58.29% of the respondents are female, while 41.71% are male. In terms of age, 34.86% of the respondents are between 31 to 35 years old. Also, 41.71% of the respondents have also been in service for 6 to 10 years. At the time of this study, 45.71% of the respondents are currently enrolled in graduate studies. A total of 175 public school teachers responded to the survey.

Table 1.
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	102	58.29
Male	73	41.71

Age (in years)		
21 - 25	33	18.86
26 - 30	40	22.86
31 - 35	61	34.86
36 - 40	20	11.43
> 40	21	12.0
Years in Service (in years)		
<1 year	25	14.29
1 to 5 years	50	28.57
6 to 10 years	73	41.71
>10 years	27	15.43
Educational Attainment		
Licensed Teacher	35	20
Master Teacher	60	34.29
Currently enrolled in graduate studies	80	45.71

N=175

Level of Mental Health Among Public School Teachers

Table 2 presents the level of mental health of public school teachers. In particular, the table shows the level of depression, anxiety, and stress of the respondents. The scores are interpreted using the DASS-21 scoring manual by Lovibond S. and Lovibond P. (1995), wherein each of the total summed scores for each scale is multiplied by 2. Among the three scales, the stress scale had a score of 20, which falls within 19-25, which is interpreted as moderate. Meanwhile, the score on the depression scale is 13, which falls within the score range of 10-13, interpreted as mild. In anxiety, the score is nine, which falls within 8-9, interpreted as mild.

Table 2.
Level of Mental Health of Respondents

Statements	Score	Interpretation
Depression	13	Mild
1 I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all		
2 I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things		
3 I felt that I had nothing to look forward to		
4 I felt down-hearted and blue		
5 I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything		
6 I felt I wasn't worth much as a person		
7 I felt that life was meaningless		
Anxiety	9	Mild
1 I was aware of dryness of my mouth		
2 I experienced breathing difficulty (eg, excessively rapid breathing breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)		
3 I experienced trembling (eg, in the hands).		
4 I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself.		
5 I felt I was close to panic		
6 I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (eg, sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)		

7	I felt scared without any good reason		
	Stress	20	Moderate
1.	I found it hard to wind down		
2.	I tended to over-react to situations		
3.	I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy		
4.	I found myself getting agitated		
5.	I found it difficult to relax		
6.	I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing		
7.	I felt that I was rather touchy		

Test on Significant Difference

Table 3 shows the results of testing significant differences in respondents' mental health when analyzed based on profile. The respondents' scores are analyzed using a t-test for age, and ANOVA for age, years in service, and educational attainment. Indicated in the table is the summary of the results.

Table 3.
Test on Significant Difference Mental Health analyzed according to profile

Profile	DASS-depression		DASS-Anxiety		DASS-Stress	
	t/F	Sig.	t/F	Sig.	t/F	Sig.
Gender	.787	.440	2.887	.020*	10.15	.000*
Age (in years)	.441	.850	0.16	.087	4.454	.020*
Years in Service (in years)	4.428	.000*	.961	.443	.645	.532
Educational Attainment	.263	.793	.997	.319	2.845	.090

Based on the findings of the study, it can be observed that there were significant differences in the scores of DASS depression, DASS-Anxiety, and DASS-Stress when analyzed according to specific demographic variables.

Specifically, in DASS depression, scores were significantly different when teachers were grouped according to their years in service ($t/F = 4.428$, $p = .000^*$). This suggests that the scores on DASS depression of teachers significantly differed depending on their years of service.

In DASS-Anxiety, it was found that there was a significant difference in scores when grouped according to gender ($t/F = 2.887$, $p = .020^*$). This implies that DASS-Anxiety status differed depending on whether the respondent was male or female.

Moreover, in terms of DASS stress, it was observed that there were significant differences in scores when grouped according to both gender ($t/F = 10.15$, $p = .000^*$) and age ($t/F = 4.454$, $p = .020^*$). This indicates that the scores on DASS-Stress significantly differed depending on the respondent's gender and age.

These results suggest that demographic variables such as years in service, gender, and age may play a role in determining the scores on the DASS-depression, DASS-Anxiety, and DASS-Stress scales. These findings may have implications for developing interventions and

support programs to improve teachers' mental health, particularly those at a higher risk for depression, anxiety, or stress.

Discussion

The results of the descriptive research on teachers' mental health indicate that the public school teachers in Davao De Oro are currently experiencing mild levels of depression and anxiety. These findings are consistent with a recent study by Gokyldiz et al. (2021), which suggests that teachers worldwide have struggled with their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has had a widespread negative impact on mental health, with many people experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of depression and anxiety. A study conducted in the United States found that rates of depression increased from 8.5% before the pandemic to 27.8% during the pandemic, and rates of anxiety symptoms increased from 29.2% before the pandemic to 43.3% during the pandemic (Ettman et al., 2020). While no studies on teachers' mental health during the pandemic have been conducted in Davao De Oro, the researchers found that most respondents reported feeling stressed out. Interestingly, this stress level varied significantly based on the teachers' years of service.

This finding is consistent with the results of a meta-analysis conducted by Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2021), which showed that teachers in schools have higher levels of anxiety, depression, and stress than those at colleges. The same meta-analysis revealed that college professors reported higher stress levels than their kindergarten through 12th grade peers. Given these findings, it is vital to provide teachers with the necessary support to ensure their well-being and enable them to perform their roles effectively.

It is clear from the results that the pandemic has significantly impacted the mental health of public school teachers in Davao De Oro. The findings of this study add to the growing body of research highlighting the importance of addressing mental health concerns among teachers during and after the pandemic. Effective interventions and support systems should be implemented to help teachers manage their mental health and well-being to continue providing quality education to their students.

The significance of supporting teachers' advanced studies has been recognized by the Department of Education (DepEd) as it can improve their competencies and promote career advancement. Descriptive research conducted by Sarabia and Collantes (2020) sheds light on the mental health status of public school teachers during the pandemic. The study indicates a significant difference in the stress levels experienced by teachers based on their years of service. Teachers in the profession for over a decade reported lower stress levels than their less experienced counterparts.

Moreover, according to a study by Al Lily et al. (2020), teachers' capacity to teach effectively may be hampered by the growth in anxiety and depression symptoms and the rates of divorce and domestic violence. These results have important ramifications since even slight manifestations of anxiety and depression can negatively impact a person's quality of life and general well-being. In addition to affecting relationships and productivity, these situations can have an adverse effect on the economy. Further, teachers feel greater responsibility for younger children, as they need more care and protection. Due to this, teachers felt under pressure to care for children effectively and respond to their families' worries (Hong, Liu, & Zhang, 2021). Hence, leading to the development of symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Several studies have examined the relationship between gender and anxiety. A study by Zhang et al. (2021) found gender differences in anxiety amid the pandemic. Women reported higher anxiety levels than men, possibly because of greater exposure to COVID-19-related stressors. Other studies have also suggested that social and cultural factors may contribute to gender differences in anxiety. For example, a study by Fischer et al. (2015) found that women were more likely than men to endorse anxiety-related concerns about their appearance, health, and social relationships. Similarly, a study by Harnois and Gabriel (2014) found that gender differences in anxiety were related to experiences of discrimination and marginalization.

Stress significantly contributes to various physical and mental health problems, and numerous studies have shown significant differences in stress levels based on age and gender. Li et al. (2018) found that stress levels tend to increase with age in Chinese adults, while Moustaka et al. (2021) found that female healthcare workers reported higher stress levels than their male counterparts. Additionally, Shoji et al. (2016) found that female teachers reported higher levels of job stress than male teachers. These differences may be attributed to various factors, including gender-based discrimination, differences in work-family balance, and greater exposure to student behavior problems.

Age is a crucial factor in stress levels among teachers, as younger teachers have been found to report higher stress levels than their older counterparts. Habibi et al. (2021) found that younger teachers experienced higher stress levels due to factors such as lower levels of experience and tenure, less social support, and more significant pressure to meet performance standards. It is important to note that stress can significantly impact teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and performance, ultimately affecting the quality of education provided to students.

In light of these findings, schools and educational institutions must prioritize the well-being of their teachers and provide them with the necessary support and resources to manage stress, depression, and anxiety. This may include strategies such as providing opportunities for professional development, offering counseling and mental health services, and promoting a positive work culture that values and supports the well-being of teachers. By doing so, schools can improve the health and well-being of their teachers and enhance the quality of education provided to their students.

CONCLUSIONS

This research aimed to examine the mental health status of public school teachers in Davao De Oro by utilizing the DASS-21 scale to measure depression, anxiety, and stress. The findings of this study indicate that public school teachers in the province are currently experiencing mild levels of depression and anxiety. These mental health challenges may lead to more severe psychological symptoms if left untreated and unaddressed. Additionally, the study revealed that public school teachers are experiencing a moderate level of stress, which can also impact their overall mental well-being.

Various factors can affect teachers' mental health, including workload, job demands, and personal life events. Therefore, it is essential to implement psychoeducational and DepEd-level program interventions that address public school teachers' specific mental health needs in Davao De Oro. By doing so, we can improve the mental health status of public school teachers and ultimately enhance the quality of education they provide.

In conclusion, this research highlights the need to prioritize the mental health of public school teachers in Davao De Oro. It is crucial to provide support and resources that can help

address their mental health challenges and promote overall well-being. Policymakers and school administrators need to prioritize the mental health of educators by implementing policies and programs that provide them with access to resources such as counseling, peer support, and stress-management training. By taking such measures, we can ensure that teachers are better equipped to face the challenges of their profession and provide quality education to their students.

CONSENT

The author has requested and received approval from the respondents. Both informed consent and assent forms have been completed, signed, and documented.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical considerations are important to be made during the conduct of a study. This ensures that this research considers the participants' best interests. This also ensures that boundaries that may make the participants uncomfortable or that may impinge upon their basic rights are considered. The ethical considerations made in this research are beneficence and non-maleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity, justice, and respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity.

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