Workplace Stress and Coping Orientation in Promoting Desirable Instructional Performance Among Public Elementary School Teachers

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Abstract

This research aimed to study workplace stress levels, coping orientation, and instructional performance of the public-school teachers. This study intends to determine the perceived level of workplace stress of respondents in terms of workload, leader support, human relation, teaching environment, and instructional resources. It also desires to identify their coping orientation as to problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping strategies. Third, it aims to ascertain their level of instructional performance as to content and knowledge, learning environment, diversity of learners, community linkages, and plus factor. Lastly, it aspires to discover the significant relationship between the instructional performance of teachers, and level of workplace stress and coping orientation. This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design which involves 193 elementary teachers from Sariaya West District and gathered data using purposive sampling thru survey questionnaire disseminated via Google forms. It was revealed that respondents are not experiencing stress in their workplace. Moreover, coping techniques was highly practiced as to problem-focused and moderately practiced as to emotion-focused and avoidant coping strategies. It was disclosed that the instructional performance was very satisfactory. The findings concluded that there is a significant relationship between the instructional performance of teachers and their level of workplace stress as well as coping orientation. This study suggests that school administrators should identify and address the possible sources of teachers' stress and the necessity for professional development curriculum in effectively collaborating with students and reflect on a variety of productive coping techniques.

Keywords: Workplace Stress, Coping Orientation, Instructional Performance, Sariaya West District

1. Introduction

Teachers have vital roles in the achievement of students' goals in life. With regard to this, according to Verma (2020), the first thing that an individual needs to understand about teaching as a profession is that it is all about motivating and inspiring pupils to reach their full potential. Thus, it can be seen that teachers have roles that requires effort and responsibilities that needed to be addressed at school. Aside from this, it was also discussed in the article of Edmonger (2021), that teaching is a career and a way to help kids reach their full potential and learn valuable life lessons including respect, sharing ethical principles, and cultural differences. Noting this, with such great responsibilities and tasks in connection to teaching, educators experiences stress at work and thus, have potential effects on their productivity and in the quality of education of the institution that they are in.

Teaching is linked to a lot of workplace stress due to plenty of roles that should be performed and maintained. Since some of the teachers also have families at home, they also need to accommodate the needs of their students as second parents within the school. Hence, it is important for teachers to perform their roles in the classroom which is to assure that their students will be able to succeed in life.

According to Gershenson & Holt (2022), without a doubt, teaching is a difficult career. The task is very difficult, and many aspects of the job are out of the teachers' control, particularly the experiences that pupils bring to the classroom. And those areas that teachers have control over, like lesson planning and effective classroom management, demand lengthy workdays spent controlling emotions as well as extra, unpaid labor at night.

Aside from this, according to an article posted by Will (2021), the primary factor in public school teachers leaving their jobs is stress, not low pay. The pressures placed on teachers have now risen as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. The difficulties and disappointments of teaching weren't worth it, according to 43% of all the instructors who quit voluntarily and before their scheduled retirement.

Thus, among the reasons that teachers quit their profession was due to workplace stress that they often experience which was further enhanced due to the pandemic. A lot of changes happened in the education sector which had led to drastic adjustments to teachers' roles and responsibilities. However, some of the teachers viewed such roles and responsibilities as uncompensated hence, driving them to decrease their passion on their work.

Taking note of this, workplace stress may possibly affect teaching performance which may also lead to poor academic performance of students. This would be a major problem among school since, the students are not able to get the learning that they needed and the motivation and inspiration that should be given by teachers.

According to a blog posted by Drury (2017), the Teachers Assurance study found that 83% of teachers feel continually exhausted as a result of their anxieties, 42% feel less capable of performing their duties as a result, and 66% stated stress made them less patient with others. In addition, 84% of the instructors polled believed they would likely be better teachers if they were less stressed.

In relation to this, this study aims to determine the level of workplace stress and coping orientation used by public school teachers in promoting desirable instructional performance. Particularly, this study also focuses on knowing how the workplace stress affects the performance of teacher and the possible coping orientation utilized by public school teacher to minimize or avoid such stressors thus, improving their teaching performance within the classroom.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Workplace Stress

Stress in the workplace is always present in which workers may also experience unfavorable effects on their everyday life. In connection to this, based on an article written by the World Health Organization (2020), people may experience work-related stress as a reaction to pressures and demands that are not compatible with their skills and knowledge and that test their capacity for adjustment. Although stress can arise under a variety of work conditions, it is frequently exacerbated when staff members feel they have little support from managers and coworkers and little influence over work procedures. Stress and pressure are frequently confused, and this is occasionally used as a justification for poor management techniques.

One of the biggest causes of people leaving the teaching profession is teacher stress. Despite the fact that teaching has always been stressful, the difficulties many educators faced as a result of Covid-19 have made things worse. A staggering 60% of instructors reported feeling stressed. Due to stress, many instructors are either considering quitting for the first time or have already quit (Gomez, 2022).

This also coincides with the article written by Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (2023) wherein, when there is a tension between the expectations of the job and the level of control the person has over satisfying those demands, it can lead to negative physical and emotional reactions at

work known as stress. Stress is generally a result of having a job with high demands and little control over the environment.

Workplace stress can result from a variety of causes or from a single incident. Both employers and employees may be affected. It's generally accepted that some stress is healthy (also known as "challenge" or "positive stress"), but when stress levels become too high, problems in both your mental and physical health may result (CCOHS, 2023).

2.2 Coping Orientation

Morin (2023) stated that people employ coping mechanisms to deal with difficult circumstances. Effective stress management can improve your physical and mental health as well as your capacity for peak performance. However, not every coping mechanism is made equal. It can be tempting to use tactics that provide immediate relief but could lead to worse issues in the future. It's crucial to develop effective coping mechanisms that will enable you to handle difficult events or lessen mental distress.

It's first important to relax your body in order to counteract your stress response. You absorb information differently when your stress response is engaged, and you may experience physical and emotional exhaustion. Chronic stress may develop if this state lasts a long time. Finding a tranquil environment and taking long, deep breaths can help you relax. Inhale, hold for five seconds, and then gently let it out. Repeat a number of times. Other soothing techniques can include meditation and aromatherapy. This exercise helps calm your anxiety and reduce a pounding heart (Scott, 2021).

2.3 Instructional Performance

A study about Work-Related Stress and Teaching Performance of Teachers in Selected School in the Philippines (Sarabia & Collantes, 2020), most of the participants were within the age range of 41 years old to 50 years old, where most of them were females. There was a significant difference on the work-related stress including demand, control, change, role, and relationship to coworker. Sex and teaching position were positive predictors of teaching performance which implied females tended to perform better than males; and teachers with higher position had a higher teaching performance.

According to a study Farber noted that persistent stress that comes with teaching can endanger and harm high-quality instructional practices that should be used consistently in schools today. Teachers, in this opinion, will be more productive and, as a result, will tend to accomplish more than is required if they are able to cope with stress. (Yunarti, et al.,2020)

A study revealed that Filipino teachers, have a strong ability to compartmentalize their problems. They are also emotionally aware to the point where they can recognize, use, comprehend, and control emotions both within and outside of the classroom, including while dealing with personal issues. As a result, students maintain a pleasant attitude in the classroom and complete their tasks effectively. Furthermore, Filipino instructors' problem compartmentalization capacity and coping styles have influenced their classroom behavior in a positive and significant way, resulting in exceptional teaching performance. (Go, M. B., et al., 2020)

Although it is now acknowledged that most stressors elicit both types of coping, a study found that problem-focused coping was preferred to emotion-focused coping for long-term,results healthier psychological functioning (Boniwell & Tunariu, 2019).

Reduced job satisfaction, poor teaching methods, and poor student results have all been connected to educator stress. However, it is unknown whether educators who have a high level of teaching efficacy are better able to cope with stress. (Nathaniel P., et al., 2016)

A study by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) highlights the significant stressors faced by teachers, leading to physical and emotional exhaustion. The research emphasizes the need to evaluate teachers' working conditions and address the heavy workloads, time pressure, and lack of flexibility in preparation time. It also underscores the importance of value concordance and adaptation to individual student needs as factors contributing to teacher stress. The study reveals that teachers of different ages share similar perceived causes of job pleasure and stress, although the effects of stress and coping strategies vary with age. Younger teachers work long hours to meet high expectations, while middle-aged teachers resort to sick

absences for short work breaks. The findings call for reducing teacher workloads and providing adequate recovery time to prevent severe exhaustion and burnout.

Most people, no matter how well adjusted, will suffer at least short-term distress while they negotiate periods of transition, trauma, challenges and loss. Stress has great impact on one performance and efficiency; however, the intense pressure and demands of coping determine the consequence of stress on performance. (Baqutayan, 2015)

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The figure below explains how the research flows. The independent variable box shows the Workplace Stress with five sub-variables namely teaching environment, human relation, workload, leader support and instructional resources. The second independent variable is the coping orientation which was composed of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and avoidant coping. The study aimed to measure the correlation of the independent variables to dependent variable which was the instructional performance, which has five sub-variables content and knowledge, learning environment, diversity oof learners, community linkages and plus factor.
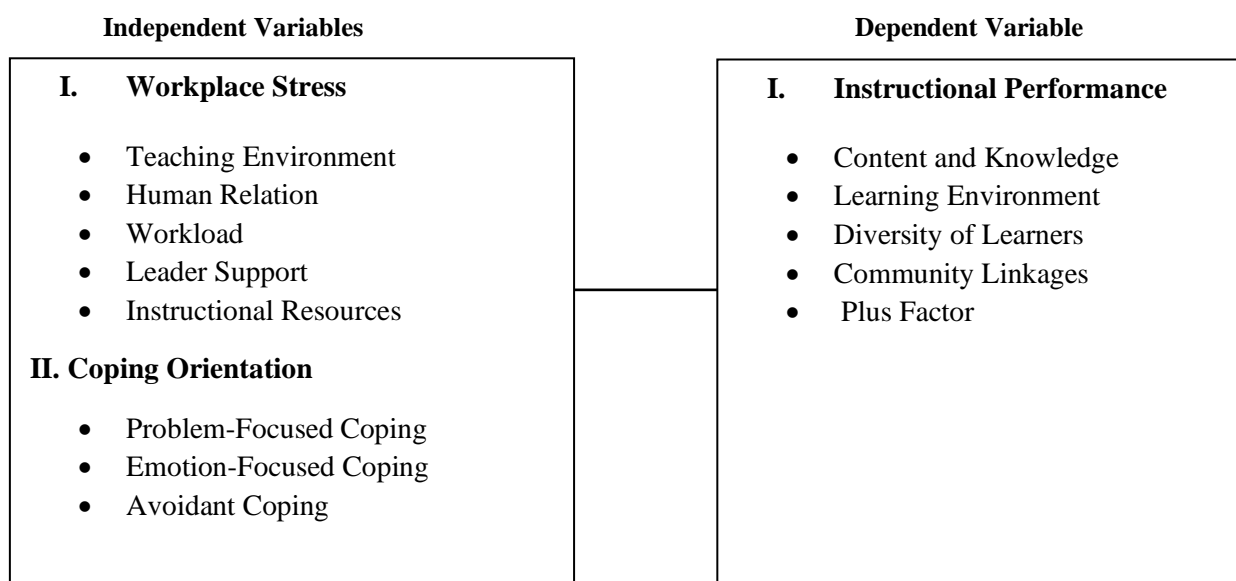
Independent Variables	Dependent Variable
I. Workplace Stress • Teaching Environment • Human Relation • Workload • Leader Support • Instructional Resources **II. Coping Orientation** • Problem-Focused Coping • Emotion-Focused Coping • Avoidant Coping	**I. Instructional Performance** • Content and Knowledge • Learning Environment • Diversity of Learners • Community Linkages • Plus Factor

Figure 1. The Research Paradigm

3. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were posited in the study:

H1. Workplace Stress is not significantly related to instructional performance.

H2. Coping Orientation is not significantly related to instructional performance.

4. Methodology

The descriptive and correlational methods were used in the study. This study used the descriptive-correlational research design and utilized survey questionnaires and scale as basic data gathering tools since it aims to determine teachers' level of workplace stress and coping orientation they use in relation to their instructional performance.

The respondents of the study were public elementary school teachers of Sariaya West District. Specifically, it includes 193 public elementary teachers of Sariaya West District designated as Teacher I-III. Purposive sampling was used in this study since Teacher I-III designations were considered as part

of the restriction needed in the study. The research instruments that were utilized were the teacher-made survey questionnaires to measure the variables and standardized questionnaires. The survey questionnaire was divided into four (4) parts which gathered data that were related to the study.

Part 1. Respondents' Profile. The first part of the questionnaire assessed the socio-demographic profile of the respondents in terms of sex, age, designation, years in service, highest educational attainment, grade level taught, number of ancillary services or coordinatorship, and the attended mental health programs.

Part 2. Respondents' Workplace Stress Level. The second part comprises indicators that were in connection to the determination of the workplace stress of public elementary school teachers in terms of teaching environment, human relations, workload, leader support, and instructional resources. Each variable was comprised of five (5) indicators that were related to each of the stated variables.

Part 3. Respondents' Coping Orientation. The third part determined the coping orientation used by the respondents in terms of problem-focused coping orientation, emotion-focused coping orientation, and avoidant coping orientation. Each variable also comprises five (5) indicators.

Part 4. Respondents' Instructional Performance. The last part of the questionnaire gathered the data related to the instructional performance of the teachers in terms of content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, and assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development, and the plus factor. The questionnaires were subjected to validation before their administration to the respondents. For content validation, the initial draft of the research instrument was presented to the experts such as the school head, master teachers, English teachers, and Teacher III, for critique. A revision was made to come up with an accurate instrument. Comments and recommendations of the validators were considered. After validating the instrument, the researcher conducted pilot testing on thirty teachers outside her district to identify the Cronbach's alpha and reliability of the instrument. The questionnaires were made in the google form and distributed to every school head through the link. The data gathered were tabulated for statistical treatment with the help of her statistician. The data collected were treated as confidential and used only for the study. Several statistical tools were used to present, analyze, and interpret the data gathered. The mean and standard deviation were employed to evaluate the respondents' responses to the descriptive questions. For the inferential part, the Pearson-moment of correlation coefficient was used to evaluate the respondents' responses and determine the relationship between variables.

5. Result

5.1 Testing of Hypotheses

Table 1. Correlation between Workplace Stress and Instructional Performance of Public School Teachers

| Workplace Stress | Instructional Performance | | | | |
	Content and Knowledge	Learning Environment	Diversity of Learners	Community Linkages	Plus Factor
Teaching Environment	.440**	.428**	.439**	.459**	.317**
Human Relation	.492**	.489**	.427**	.499**	.324**
Workload	.537**	.545**	.523**	.531**	.413**
Leader Support	.417**	.388**	.420**	.444**	.303**

Instructional Resources	.425**	.409**	.422**	.400**	.337**
Teaching Environment	.440**	.428**	.439**	.459**	.317**

Legend: N= 193   ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); 1.00- Perfect Correlation, 0.99-0.80- Very Strong Correlation, 0.79-0.60 Strong Correlation, 0.59-0.40- Moderately Strong Correlation, 0.39-0.20-Weak Correlation, 0.19-0.01-Very Weak Correlation, 0-No Correlation

Table 1. The findings regarding the correlation analysis of workplace stress indicators and instructional performance according to the responses of 193 public school elementary teachers is illustrated in Table 1. It was obvious that workload and learning environment are deemed to have the highest correlation of 0.545 among others. As perceived by the teacher-respondents, the assigned workload and learning environment indicated to have positive moderately strong association compared to other indicators aforementioned. Whereas, leader support and plus factor indicator resulted as the lowest correlation having an r-value of 0.303 which can be described as weak correlation but still considered as statistically significant. Meaning, the presence of leader support from the educational institution and associating plus factor in instructional performance is indeed correlated. Hence, it can be gleaned that all indicators of workplace stress and instructional performance shows a positive moderate correlation to each other and revealed a significant relationship at the 0.01 level. Then, it was concluded, according to the analysis, that there is a significant relationship between the instructional performance of public-school teachers and their level of workplace stress.

Occupational stress is the stress that students encounter in the workplace. Teaching is one of the most demanding jobs in the twenty-first century, according to (Kaur, 2011). Current or relevant challenges with teachers' excessive paper workload include teaching and non-teaching-related paperwork. The former involves preparation, assessment, and documenting (Lane et al. 2011), whilst the latter consists of report writing (Shou, 2019), module reproduction, paper compilation, accomplishment forms, documenting every activity, and demonstrative reports (Tomacruz, 2018). Non-teaching related paperwork, as per (Jonson et al, 2013), contains administrative forms, cumulative report cards, notes, and meeting agendas and conclusions. Pressure from heavy workloads, time constraints, unbalanced work-life integration, limited personal freedom, excessive administrative responsibilities, relationship problems with colleagues and school leaders, role conflict/ambiguity, managing innovation and change, emotional exhaustion, fear of losing authority in the classroom, fear of evaluation, and low professional self-esteem, among others (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020).

Table 2. Correlation between Coping Orientation and the Instructional Performance of the Respondents

	Instructional Performance				
Coping Orientation	**Content and Knowledge**	**Learning Environment**	**Diversity of Learners**	**Community Linkages**	**Plus Factor**
Problem-Focused Coping	.539**	.604**	.461**	.518**	.429**
Emotion-Focused Coping	.309**	.313**	.279**	.324**	.314**
Avoidant Coping	.184*	.129	.247**	.185**	.375**

Legend: N= 193   **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); 1.00- Perfect Correlation, 0.99-0.80- Very Strong Correlation, 0.79-0.60 Strong Correlation, 0.59-0.40- Moderately Strong Correlation, 0.39-0.20-Weak Correlation, 0.19-0.01-Very Weak Correlation, 0-No Correlation

In Table 2, the correlation analysis between coping orientation and instructional performance were determined. It was visible that all indicators are showing positive relationships as per observing the correlation coefficient of each variable. Garnering a 0.604 r-value, being the highest correlation obtained, the analysis shows that the relationship with problem-focused coping orientation and learning have positive strong correlation to each other. However, avoidant coping orientation and learning environment have low but still positive very weak relationship which gained an r-value of 0.129. Thus, it demonstrates the relationship between avoidant coping and learning environment is the only relationship that resulted to be not significant at 0.05 level. Overall, the results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the instructional performance and coping orientation of the public elementary teachers when it comes to dealing with workplace stress except for avoidant coping and learning environment.

In the influential 'transactional model' of stress and behavioral self-regulation, coping strategies were divided into emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies. Whereas problem-focused coping is aimed at solving the perceived problem or doing something to alter the source of stress, emotion-focused coping is aimed at reducing or managing the emotional distress that is associated with or triggered by the situation (McIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T. & Mercer, S., 2020). Tension-releasing coping tended to be employed in coping with emotional exhaustion while problem-focused coping strategies tended to be used in coping with low personal accomplishment. In the extensive research of (Muazzam, A., Anjum, A. & Visvizi, A., 2020), the essence of problem-focused coping strategies rests in a conscious attempt by the victim to resolve the problem by confronting those who are responsible for the situation of strain. This may include direct and instrumental forms of action.

6. Discussion

The study revealed the following findings:

1. The perceived level of workplace stress of respondents in terms of teaching environment, human relation, workload, leader support and instructional resources are indicated as not stressed.

2. The respondents' perceived that problem-focused coping is "highly practiced" by the respondents while emotion-focused coping and avoidant coping is "moderately practiced".

3. The level of instructional performance of the respondents as to content and knowledge, learning environment, diversity of learners, community linkages, and plus factor were indicated "very satisfactory".

4. There is a significant relationship between the instructional performance of public school teachers and their level of workplace stress and coping orientation except for avoidant coping strategy and learning environment.

7. Conclusion

The findings gathered in the study led to the formulation of the conclusion:

This research concluded that since there is a significant relationship between the instructional performance of public-school teachers and their level of workplace stress as well as their coping orientation with an exception to the correlation between avoidant coping strategy and learning environment yet, the null hypothesis is therefore not sustained.

8. Recommendations

Based on the result obtained, the following recommendations were hereby made;

1. Administrators should evaluate and plan for the availability of instructional and educational resources that are necessary for promoting both teacher and student development. They have to assure that sufficient learning and teaching materials are accessible for teachers to utilize to be able to produce outstanding instruction and education and to encourage learners in attaining the curriculum's educational standards.
2. Teachers are encouraged to participate in mental health awareness and stress management programs, as well as various groups that will be beneficial in enhancing the quality of the teaching-learning process.
3. School administrators and managers should place emphasis on identifying and addressing the sources of teachers' stress, as well as the necessity for professional development curriculum in effectively collaborating with students and reflecting on a variety of more productive coping techniques.
4. Future research is expected to focus on other possible factors associated with occupational stress, such as large class sizes, school activities, a lack of professional recognition, disciplinary issues, bureaucracy, time pressure, and a lack of benefits, in order to measure the variability of teachers' occupational stress.

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