

Occupational Stress Coping Mechanisms and Work Performance Of Teachers

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Abstract

This study investigated the occupational stress coping mechanisms and work performance of public elementary school teachers in the Teresa Sub-Office during the School Year 2024–2025. The research aimed to determine the extent of coping strategies employed by teachers and their relationship to performance outcomes. The total population of 314 teachers from Abuyod, Bagumbayan, Quiterio San Jose, Pantay, Prinza, Sitio Ibabaw I, and Teresa Elementary Schools served as respondents. Data were collected using a descriptive survey research design through a researcher-made questionnaire checklist covering coping domains, including mindset and thinking patterns, managing feelings, action taken, body's response, support system, and finding purpose and meaning. Documentary analysis of teachers' Individual Performance Commitment and Review Forms (IPCRF) provided insights into their work performance. Findings revealed that the majority of teachers were mature-aged, predominantly female, married, holding a Teacher I position, and had obtained a master's degree. Most had 6–15 years of service and attended various in-service trainings. Teachers reported a high extent of occupational stress coping mechanisms across all domains. Significant differences in coping mechanisms were observed based on educational attainment and position title, while other demographic variables such as age, sex, civil status, length of service, and in-service training were not significant. Work performance was generally Very Satisfactory, and statistical analysis indicated a positive relationship between coping mechanisms and work performance. The study concluded that enhancing teachers' coping strategies positively influences their performance. It is recommended that school administrators design differentiated wellness and coping workshops, integrate stress management modules into training programs, and provide incentives for higher education pursuits. Further studies may explore additional factors affecting teachers' coping strategies and performance.

Keywords: occupational stress, coping mechanisms, work performance, teachers, educational attainment, school management

1. Introduction

Education plays a critical role in shaping productive and responsible citizens by equipping learners with essential knowledge, skills, and values. In the Philippines, public schools provide free education from kindergarten to tertiary levels, ensuring broad access to learning and the development of competencies needed in the modern workforce. Teachers, as central agents in this process, are tasked not only with delivering instruction but also with bridging gaps in student learning, implementing curriculum reforms, and fostering innovation in teaching practices. Their commitment, however, is increasingly challenged by the demands of 21st-century education, including rigorous curriculum implementation, administrative responsibilities, extracurricular duties, and the integration of technology in instruction. These factors contribute to occupational stress, which is characterized by psychological and physiological responses when job demands exceed an individual's coping resources. Chronic occupational stress can lead to fatigue, emotional exhaustion, burnout, diminished motivation, and decreased instructional quality, ultimately affecting learner outcomes and overall school performance.

Legal mandates, including the 1987 Philippine Constitution (Article XIV, Section 5), the Mental Health Law (RA 11036), and DepEd frameworks such as the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST, DO 42, s. 2017), emphasize the importance of teacher well-being, professional development, and institutional support. These provisions advocate for interventions that promote resilience, mental health, and effective coping strategies to maintain high standards of teaching performance. Despite these mandates, many teachers, particularly in resource-limited or geographically remote schools, experience inadequate support, heavy workloads, complex classroom dynamics, and parental pressures, all of which exacerbate stress levels. The researcher, as an educator immersed in the realities of school operations, has observed the emotional and physical toll these challenges impose, including fatigue, anxiety, and diminished instructional focus.

Empirical studies support these observations. Nyame (2021) and Onojetah (2021) found that educators worldwide face significant occupational stressors and adopt coping strategies such as administrative support, problem-solving, and optimism to manage these challenges. Local studies by Ellovido and Quirap (2024), Paril (2023), Vallesterio (2022), Constantino (2023), and Antonio (2023) further highlight that teachers employ both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping mechanisms, with varying effectiveness depending on workload, institutional support, and professional development opportunities. These studies, however, often examine stress and coping in isolation, with limited exploration of the direct relationship between occupational stress coping mechanisms and measurable work performance outcomes, particularly in post-pandemic contexts. Moreover, demographic and professional factors—such as age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, position title, length of service, and in-service training—show inconsistent effects across studies, indicating a need for context-specific investigation.

Recognizing these gaps, the present study aims to examine the occupational stress coping mechanisms of public elementary school teachers and their relationship to work performance. By integrating quantitative assessment with researchers' firsthand observations, this study seeks to identify practical strategies and institutional interventions that foster teacher resilience, sustain motivation, and enhance instructional effectiveness. Findings from this research are expected to inform school-based programs, professional development initiatives, and policy adjustments, ultimately contributing to a supportive, equitable, and sustainable teaching environment that benefits educators and learners alike.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study applied the descriptive survey research design utilizing researcher-made questionnaire checklist as a tool in gathering the needed data.

2.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools under the Teresa District of the Division of Rizal. These schools—namely Abuyod Elementary School, Bagumbayan Elementary School, Quiterio San Jose Elementary School, Pantay Elementary School, Prinza Elementary School, Sitio Ibabaw I Elementary School, and Teresa Elementary School—represent a diverse mix of urban and rural learning environments.

2.3 Respondents

The total population of 314 or 100% of teachers in public elementary schools in Teresa District will be considered as respondents of the study. They will be described in terms of age, sex, civil status, position title, educational attainment, length of service and in-service trainings attended.

2.4 Research Instruments

The study employed a researcher-made questionnaire checklist divided into three parts: Part I gathered respondents' personal and professional profiles (age, sex, civil status, position, educational attainment, length of service, and in-service trainings), Part II assessed the extent of occupational stress coping mechanisms across six domains—mindset and thinking patterns, managing feelings, actions taken, body's response to stress, support system, and finding purpose and meaning—with a total of 60 items rated on a five-point Likert scale, and Part III utilized the latest Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR) ratings to determine teachers' work performance. To ensure content validity and reliability, the instrument was rigorously reviewed by a panel of experts, including the thesis adviser, dean, statisticians, professors, principals, master teachers, and guidance personnel, who evaluated item clarity, relevance, alignment with study objectives, and contextual appropriateness. Feedback from this validation process was incorporated to refine the questionnaire, enhancing its accuracy, usability, and capacity to capture meaningful data on teachers' occupational stress coping mechanisms and performance levels.

2.5 Data Collection

The study followed a systematic process guided by a Gantt Chart, beginning with the submission of proposed titles in July 2024 and culminating in the final manuscript submission. Chapters 1 to 3 were prepared from September to November 2024, accompanied by a comprehensive review of related literature until the colloquium in March 2025. The researcher-made questionnaire-checklist was developed and validated by a panel of experts, after which permission was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent. Data were collected via a Google survey form in compliance with the Data Privacy Act, encoded and analyzed using SPSS, and interpreted to formulate findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Following the final defense, the manuscript was revised, checked for plagiarism, and submitted in hardbound form to the Graduate Studies Office and other relevant institutional offices.

2.6 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using various statistical tools to address the study's objectives. Frequency, percentage, and rank distribution were used to describe the respondents' profiles. Weighted mean and rank distribution assessed the extent of occupational stress coping mechanisms across different aspects. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) determined significant differences in coping mechanisms based on respondents' profiles. Mean and standard deviation evaluated teachers' work performance as reflected in their Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCRF) ratings. Finally, correlation analysis examined the relationship between the extent of occupational stress coping mechanisms and the level of work performance.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The study ensured the protection of the rights and welfare of all respondents. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity of all information provided were strictly maintained, and data were used solely for research purposes. The researcher ensured that the respondents were treated with respect and that no harm, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, would result from their participation in the study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile of the Public School Teacher Respondents

As reflected on the table out of 314 teacher-respondents, 175 or 55.7 percent are in the age bracket of 36-45 years old followed by 26-35 years with 75 or 23.9 percent while few of them belong to ages 25 years old and below. Female with 283 or 90.1 percent outnumbered the male with 31 or 9.9 percent and more of the respondents are married with 252 or 80.3 percent followed by single with 55 percent or 17.5 percent while 7 or 2.2 percent are widow/widower. Several of them pursued Masters Degree with 145 or 46.2, followed by Masters Degree earners with 79 or 25.2 percent, followed by Bachelors Degree with 70 percent or 22.3 percent and the least is 18 or 5.7 percent for PhD Graduate and 2 or 0.6 percent for PhD unit earners. With regards to position title, most of them are holding Teacher I with 208 or 66.2 percent followed by Teacher III with 55 or 17.5 percent followed by master Teacher I with 28 or 8.9 percent and few of them are Teacher II with 7.3 percent. Most of the respondents stayed in school for 6-15 years with 184 of 58.6 percent, followed by 71 or 22.6 percent of 15-25 years in service and few of them have teaching experience of 5 years and below. Majority have attended Regional, and National in-service trainings while few of them have School, District and International Level of in-service trainings. the division and school levels—further demonstrates their commitment to continuous professional development.

Table 1: *Profile of the Respondents*

Age	Frequency	Percent	Rank
25 years old and below	5	1.6	5
26-35 years old	75	23.9	2
36-45 years old	175	55.7	1
46-55 years old	47	15.0	3
56 years old and above	12	3.8	4
Total	314	100.0	
Sex			
Male	31	9.9	2
Female	283	90.1	1
Total	314	100.0	
Civil Status			
Single	55	17.5	2
Married	252	80.3	1
Widow/er	7	2.2	3
Total	314	100.0	
Educational Attainment			
EdD / PhD Graduate	18	5.7	4
With EdD / PhD Units	2	0.6	5
Master's Degree	145	46.2	1
Master's Degree Units	79	25.2	2

Baccalaureate Degree	70	22.3	3
Total	314	100.0	
Position Title			
Master Teacher I	28	8.9	3
Teacher III	55	17.5	2
Teacher II	23	7.3	4
Teacher I	208	66.2	1
Total	314	100.0	
Length of Service			
5 years and below	59	18.8	3
6-15 years	184	58.6	1
16-25 years	71	22.6	2
Total	314	100.0	
In-service Trainings			
International Level	22	7.0	5
National Level	80	25.5	2
Regional Level	81	25.8	1
Division Level	64	20.4	3
District Level	50	15.9	4
School Level	17	5.4	6
Total	314	100.0	

3.2. Extent of Occupational Stress Coping Mechanisms of Public School Teachers as Perceived by Themselves with Respect to Mindset and Thinking Patterns, Managing Feelings, Action Taken, Body's Response to Stress, Support System, and Finding Purpose and Meaning

The findings on the extent of occupational stress coping mechanisms of public school teachers reveal that they engage in all six domains—**Mindset and Thinking Patterns, Managing Feelings, Action Taken, Body's Response to Stress, Support System, and Finding Purpose and Meaning—**to a high extent, with weighted means ranging from 4.14 to 4.49 and an overall mean of 4.31. Among these, Finding Purpose and Meaning (WM = 4.49) emerged as the most utilized strategy, indicating that teachers heavily rely on intrinsic motivation and reflective practice to sustain resilience, while Body's Response to Stress (WM = 4.14) was the least emphasized, suggesting a potential gap in attention to physiological self-care. These results align with the findings of Ellovido and Quirap (2024) and Ryan and Pantao (2024), which emphasize that purpose-driven cognition and reflective practices strengthen teachers' psychological resilience, while Crum et al. (2023) highlighted that mindset-based strategies like positive reframing support emotional regulation. Pantao (2025) further noted that structured behavioral routines, such as task organization and rest, complement internal coping mechanisms to enhance overall well-being. The implications of these results suggest that schools should strengthen wellness programs that promote both mental and physical health, integrating strategies that encourage teachers to prioritize self-care alongside reflective and values-driven practices. By doing so, educational institutions can enhance teachers' resilience, reduce burnout, and sustain professional effectiveness, ultimately improving instructional quality and learner outcomes.

Table 2: *Extent of Occupational Stress Coping Mechanisms of Public School Teachers as Perceived by Themselves*

Competencies	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Mindset and Thinking Patterns	4.46	High Extent	2
Managing Feelings	4.28	High Extent	4
Action Taken	4.29	High Extent	3
Body's response to stress	4.14	High Extent	6
Support System	4.18	High Extent	5

Finding Purpose and Meaning	4.49	High Extent	1
Overall Mean	4.31	High Extent	

3.3. Significant Difference on the Extent of Occupational Stress Coping Mechanisms of Public School Teachers as Perceived by Themselves with Respect to the Different Aspects in Terms of their Profile

The findings indicate that the profile of teachers significantly influences the extent of occupational stress coping mechanisms, with differences observed primarily in terms of educational attainment and position title, while other demographic variables—such as age, sex, civil status, length of service, and in-service training—showed limited or no significant impact on specific coping domains. Teachers with higher educational qualifications, such as master's or doctoral degrees, reported greater engagement in adaptive coping strategies, particularly in cognitive reframing, emotional regulation, and proactive problem-solving, likely due to broader exposure to stress management frameworks and reflective practices (Paril, 2023). Likewise, teachers in leadership roles, including department heads and administrators, exhibited more strategic and action-oriented coping mechanisms, such as task delegation and goal setting, whereas classroom teachers relied more on emotion-focused strategies like mindfulness, peer support, and self-reflection (Delos Santos et al., 2024). These results align with Antonio (2023), who noted that variations in position and academic background shape teachers' responsibilities and coping behaviors. The implications suggest that stress management interventions should be differentiated according to teachers' profiles: advanced workshops in cognitive coping for those with postgraduate education, strategic planning and organizational stress management for leaders, and emotional literacy and mindfulness programs for classroom teachers. Such tailored approaches can strengthen teachers' overall resilience, enhance professional effectiveness, and promote well-being across diverse roles within the educational workforce.

Table 3: Significant Difference on the Extent of Occupational Stress Coping Mechanisms of Public School Teachers as Perceived by Themselves with Respect to the Different Aspects in Terms of their Profile

Age	F-value	p-value	Null Hypothesis	Verbal Interpretation
Mindset and Thinking Patterns	9.917	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Managing Feelings	3.736	0.006	Rejected	Significant
Action Taken	4.244	0.002	Rejected	Significant
Body's Response to Stress	6.895	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Support System	1.588	0.177	Accepted	Not Significant
Finding Purpose and Meaning	6.965	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Sex				
Mindset and Thinking Patterns	5.991	0.015	Rejected	Significant
Managing Feelings	2.234	0.136	Accepted	Not Significant
Action Taken	0.474	0.492	Accepted	Not Significant
Body's Response to Stress	5.386	0.021	Rejected	Significant
Support System	0.218	0.641	Accepted	Not Significant
Finding Purpose and Meaning	6.234	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Civil Status				
Mindset and Thinking Patterns	6.586	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Managing Feelings	2.915	0.035	Rejected	Significant
Action Taken	3.551	0.015	Rejected	Significant
Body's Response to Stress	2.386	0.069	Accepted	Not Significant
Support System	0.316	0.814	Accepted	Not Significant
Finding Purpose and Meaning	5.691	0.001	Rejected	Significant
Educational Attainment				
Mindset and Thinking Patterns	4.180	0.003	Rejected	Significant
Managing Feelings	5.139	0.001	Rejected	Significant
Action Taken	4.750	0.001	Rejected	Significant
Body's Response to Stress	2.670	0.032	Rejected	Significant
Support System	3.291	0.012	Rejected	Significant
Finding Purpose and Meaning	5.970	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Position Title				
Mindset and Thinking Patterns	17.218	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Managing Feelings	10.714	0.000	Rejected	Significant

Action Taken	10.665	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Body's Response to Stress	6.309	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Support System	15.453	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Finding Purpose and Meaning	22.697	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Length of Service				
Mindset and Thinking Patterns	4.585	0.011	Rejected	Significant
Managing Feelings	1.451	0.236	Accepted	Not Significant
Action Taken	2.029	0.133	Accepted	Not Significant
Body's Response to Stress	0.244	0.784	Accepted	Not Significant
Support System	3.330	0.037	Rejected	Significant
Finding Purpose and Meaning	2.312	0.101	Accepted	Not Significant
In-service Training Attended				
Mindset and Thinking Patterns	4.997	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Managing Feelings	5.984	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Action Taken	6.389	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Body's Response to Stress	1.410	0.220	Accepted	Not Significant
Support System	6.890	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Finding Purpose and Meaning	2.815	0.017	Rejected	Significant

3.4. Level of Work Performance of the Teachers as Revealed in the Latest Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form

The data in Table 4 shows that 100% of public school teachers were rated either “Outstanding” or “Very Satisfactory” in their latest performance review, with no one falling below these categories. This suggests a strong overall work performance that may be positively influenced by their frequent use of occupational stress coping mechanisms. Table 4 presents the distribution of teacher performance ratings based on the latest Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF). Out of 314 teachers evaluated, 37.2% received an “Outstanding” rating, while 62.8% were rated “Very Satisfactory.” Notably, none of the teachers fell into the “Satisfactory,” “Unsatisfactory,” or “Poor” categories, indicating a consistently high level of professional performance across the sample. This result reflects a workforce that is not only competent but also resilient and adaptive in the face of occupational stress. The absence of lower performance ratings suggests that teachers are effectively managing job-related pressures, likely through the use of diverse coping mechanisms identified in earlier tables—such as cognitive reframing, emotional regulation, action planning, and meaning-making. These findings are supported by the study of Ellovido & Quirap (2024), which established a significant positive relationship between the use of emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies and teacher performance in public elementary schools. Teachers who actively engage in stress management techniques were found to maintain higher instructional quality, better classroom management, and stronger student engagement. Moreover, the Ellovido and Quirap (2024) study emphasized that coping mechanisms such as mindfulness, peer support, and reflective practice contribute to improved job satisfaction and performance outcomes. The high ratings in the IPCRF may therefore be interpreted not only as indicators of professional competence but also as outcomes of effective stress regulation.

Table 4: *Level of Work Performance of the Teachers as Revealed in the Latest Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form*

Performance Rating	Verbal Interpretation	Frequency	Percent
4.500-5.000	Outstanding	115	37.2
3.500-4.499	Very Satisfactory	199	62.8
2.500-3.499	Satisfactory	-	-
1.500-2.499	Unsatisfactory	-	-
1.000-1.499	Poor	-	-
Total		314	100.0

3.5. Significant Relationship Between the Extent of Occupational Stress Coping Mechanisms of Public School Teachers and the Level of Their Work Performance

As indicated in the table, the test resulted in rejecting the null hypothesis not just at 5% but also 1% level of significance since all p-values are less than 0.01. Statistically, there is a positive relationship between the extent of occupational stress coping mechanisms of public school teachers and the level of their work performance. The statistical analysis revealed that the null hypothesis was rejected not only at the 5% level of significance but also at the more stringent

1% level, as all computed p-values were less than 0.01. This outcome provides strong evidence of a statistically significant relationship between the extent of occupational stress coping mechanisms employed by public school teachers and their level of work performance. This result implies that teachers who actively engage in coping strategies—whether through mindset and thinking patterns, emotional regulation, or action-oriented behaviors—tend to perform better in their professional roles. The positive correlation suggests that effective stress management contributes to enhanced focus, emotional stability, classroom management, and instructional quality. The findings of Delos Santos (2024) and Morgan (2025) collectively reinforce the theoretical lens of Putwain's (2021) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, illustrating that teachers who actively employ adaptive strategies—such as cognitive reframing, mindfulness, and goal-setting—are more likely to appraise stressors as manageable and sustain effective performance. This dynamic relationship highlights how emotional regulation, task restructuring, and positive mindset not only buffer against occupational stress but also translate into tangible outcomes like higher job satisfaction, instructional effectiveness, reduced absenteeism, and stronger student engagement, thereby underscoring the critical role of coping mechanisms in fostering resilience and professional sustainability within the teaching profession.

Table 5: *Significant Relationship Between the Extent of Occupational Stress Coping Mechanisms of Public School Teachers and the Level of Their Work Performance*

Coping Mechanism and Work Performance	r-value	p-value	Null Hypothesis	Verbal Interpretation
Mindset and Thinking Patterns	0.224	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Managing Feelings	0.367	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Action Taken	0.310	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Body's response to Stress	0.237	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Support System	0.186	0.001	Rejected	Significant
Finding Purpose and Meaning	0.196	0.000	Rejected	Significant

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that among public school teachers, educational attainment and position title significantly influence the extent of occupational stress coping mechanisms, while demographic factors such as age, sex, civil status, length of service, and in-service training do not. Teachers employ a range of coping strategies—including mindset and thinking patterns, managing feelings, actions taken, bodily responses to stress, support systems, and finding purpose and meaning—with those holding higher education or leadership positions showing greater engagement in adaptive coping. Additionally, there is a positive correlation between teachers' coping mechanisms and their work performance, indicating that stronger coping strategies are associated with higher professional effectiveness.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that school administrators design differentiated wellness programs and coping workshops tailored to teachers' educational levels and roles. Supporting higher education pursuits through incentives, scholarships, or study leaves may further enhance coping capacities. Integrating practical stress management modules into existing professional development sessions (e.g., LAC or INSET) is also suggested. Finally, the implementation of the proposed training program is encouraged, and future studies may explore other variables influencing teachers' occupational stress coping mechanisms.

Compliance with ethical standards

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