

Stress Profile of Public Elementary School Teachers in Tacloban City Division: Inputs for a Proposed Classroom Intervention Program

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Abstract— This study dealt on determining the stress profile of the public elementary school teachers in Tacloban City. Specifically, it determined the sources and level of stress of the teachers, and their corresponding coping mechanisms. With a sample size of 267 and using descriptive – correlative as methodology, the study tested hypothesis on the differences of sources and level of stress and coping mechanisms as grouped according to profile variables. The study found out that there are many sources of stress of teachers such as lack of teaching guides and learning materials, working under deadline pressures, pupils' lack of interest and poor study habits, having to deal with students' misbehavior/misconduct, and financial burden. The teachers' level of stress was generally high. Corresponding to the sources and level of stress felt by the teachers, they employed positive coping mechanisms. Though, others opted to employ negative coping strategies. There were no significant differences in the sources and level of stress as grouped according to profile variables; however, there were some significant differences in some coping strategies implying that the teachers have unique ways of dealing with stressful situations. No significant relationship was found between the level of stress and sources of stress which signifies that the level of stress do not depend on the number of stressors. It is then recommended that a classroom intervention program be developed in school to lessen stress if not eradicated.

Keywords— Coping, Public Elementary School Teachers, Stress, Super Typhoon Yolanda

I. INTRODUCTION

Recognizing the varied tasks of teachers, specifically the public school teachers, stress is undoubtedly inherent and regardless of other factors, the process of teaching is, in itself, stressful. Many teachers find the demands of being professional educator, especially in today's generation, difficult and very stressful. Teachers stress, according to Pettegrew and Wolf (2014), arises from the societal expectations on what education can do and the variety of specific tasks which teachers perform to meet these expectations.

In order to meet these expectations, teachers perform a variety of tasks. Under RA 1800, the Civil Service Commission requires government employees, to include the public school teachers, to render eight hours of service per day. However, aside from the eight hours of actual teaching with a usually large number of students, there are other specific school-related tasks that teachers perform. Teachers have to write lesson plans everyday in all learning areas, prepare instructional materials, attend faculty and staff meetings, prepare, conduct periodic evaluations or tests, and record and compute results of tests. In

addition, to keep teachers abreast of modern developments, especially in pedagogy, teachers need to read books and magazines, attend seminars and trainings, and enroll in advance degree programs.

Specifically, elementary school teaching is undoubtedly very stressful. Roxas (2009) describes the demands that go with their job. She explains that elementary school teachers play a vital role in the development of children. They introduce children to the basic of numbers, language, science and social sciences. They use games, music, artwork, films, slides, computers, and other teaching available teaching technology to teach the basic skills. Elementary school teachers take the time to model and instill the good habits and a curiosity for learning.

Day (2009) focuses on the situation within the teaching profession. She argues that for many teachers, the last 20 years have been years of survival, rather than development. As social and economic changes have placed new demands upon and created new expectations from schools, hardly a year passes without some form of reform being mooted, negotiated or imposed in the name of raising standards, and increasing user participation (Makasa, 2013). This concept regarded as stress indicates that the great part of teacher stress can be explained with the rapid pace of changes in education in the past centuries.

Stress produces numerous physical and mental symptoms which vary according to each individual's situational factors. These can include physical health decline as well as depression. The process of stress management is named as one of the keys to a happy and successful life in modern society. Although life provides numerous demands that can prove difficult to handle, stress management provides a number of ways to manage anxiety and maintain overall well-being ("Stress", 2013).

The elementary teachers in Tacloban City are not exempted from experiencing stress. They too are exposed to the same stressful work environment. In fact, Tacloban City teachers were even more exposed to stress as they were affected by Typhoon Yolanda. It must be remembered that the typhoon, which was the strongest typhoon ever recorded in the history of the world, hit Region VIII on November 8, 2013. Tacloban City was one of the places hardly hit by the very catastrophic event which claimed thousands of lives. Most of the teachers in Tacloban were victims; some of them also lost not only their homes but their loved ones. Thus, it can be said that these teachers experienced more stress than those teachers not affected by the same calamity.

Considering the nature of teachers' work which is prone to stressors, and the hazards that it may lead, there is a need for a proper stress management. Stress management refers to wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's levels of stress, especially chronic stress, usually of improving everyday functioning ("Stress Management", 2014).

Stress management starts with identifying the level and sources of stress. It may also involve determining coping strategies employed by the affected individuals, if any. In this study, these are considered to be the main concerns, which will be used as insights for the stress profile of public elementary school teachers in Tacloban City Division.

II. HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested at the .05 alpha levels:

1. There is no significant difference of the teachers' level and sources of stress, and their stress coping mechanisms when grouped according to the profile variables.
2. There is no significant relationship between the level of stress and sources of stress.

III. METHODS

The descriptive correlative design was employed. The study employed public elementary school teachers as respondents. A total of 267 teachers were chosen as respondents from a total of 802 teachers in all the 40 public elementary schools in Tacloban City. A questionnaire was prepared as the data gathering tool. Some of the sections in this questionnaire are adopted from sources, while the others are researcher-made. The whole questionnaire consisted of three parts.

Part I is on the profile of the respondents. This was researcher-made which contained items that required the respondents to check or supply the information that apply to them. Particularly, this included the following profiles: age, gender, civil status, teaching experience, highest educational attainment, and teaching assignment and teaching position.

Part II is on the source and level of stress which is a combination of an adopted/modified from a source and a researcher-made. The work-related (school and classroom) is an adaptation of Greenberg's (2011) "Comprehensive Stress Management." This contained 35 items – 20 for school-related, 10 for classroom-related and five (5) for home-related sources of stress. The school-related sources which contain a total of 20 items are adopted from the study of Makasa (2013). The school-related sources are categorized into professional capacity (3 items), administrative support (8 items), working conditions (4 items), workload (5 items,) and financial security (5 items). The classroom or pupil-related sources are classified into two categories such as pupils' discipline (5 items) which are modified from the questionnaire of Makasa (2013), and pupils' performance or aptitude and learning style (5 items) which are researcher-made. The home-related sources (5 items) are researcher-made.

For each question, the respondent answered using a 4-point scale: 4-always, 3- almost always, 2-seldom, and 1-never.

Part III is a questionnaire to determine the stress coping mechanisms used by the respondents. This questionnaire is

aligned with the sources of stress. Thus, for each source of stress in Part II, there are at two to three pre-identified stress coping mechanisms. For each coping, the respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they employ such coping mechanism using a 4-point rating scale such as 4-frequently, 3-sometimes, 2-seldom, and 1-never.

The data were statistically treated using percentage, ranking, weighted mean, single analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Pearson r.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The ages of 267 public elementary school teachers ranged from 21 to 64 with a mean age of 36. Majority (91%) are females and nine (9) percent are males. Majority (73%) are married. The mean teaching experience is 9.6 years. They generally lacked advanced studies considering that majority (66%) have only bachelor's degree without any units in the graduate program. Correspondingly, majority have lower academic ranks such as that of Teacher I (36%), Teacher II (22%) and Teacher III (38%). These teacher-respondents represent the different level such as kindergarten (15%), primary (57%), and intermediate (28%).

Stressors are categorized into three – school – related sources, classroom – related sources and home – related sources of stress. The most common school-related stress which were identified by most of the teacher-respondents are the following: lack of teaching guides and learning materials (83.2%), working under deadline pressures (79%), pressure to produce better exam results (77%), having to perform tasks not trained for (76%), and extreme temperature in classrooms (72%). The following were the most common sources of classroom-related stress: pupils' lack of interest, poor study habits (93%), having to deal with students' misbehavior/misconduct (84%), limited sanctions available to reprimand pupil indiscipline due to children's rights (83%), pupils' generally low academic performance (81%), and absenteeism and tardiness among the pupils (79%). Financial burden (69%), health problems (68%), and having to attend to the needs of husband/wife and/or children (60%) were the common home-related sources of stress.

The level of every stressors were also grouped into – school – related sources, classroom – related sources and home – related sources of stress. The overall weighted mean of 2.92 indicated that the teachers have high level of school-related stress. The most common which caused them high stress are the following low salary (mean = 3.44; very high), lack of teaching guides and learning materials (mean=3.10, high); and pressure to produce better examination results (mean = 3.00, high). The overall weighted mean of 3.05 indicated high level of stress among the teachers. The top stressors are as follows: having to deal with students' misbehavior/misconduct (mean = 3.33, very high), limited sanctions available to teachers to reprimand pupil indiscipline due to children's rights (mean = 3.26, very high), and pupils' lack of interest, and poor study habits (mean = 3.23). There is a generally high level of home-related stress as supported by the overall mean of 2.78. Financial burden (mean = 3.03, high), and extended family which mean helping other relatives financially (mean = 2.88, high) were the common sources which caused high stress to the teachers.

In general, the teachers employ positive stress coping mechanisms. Those which employed frequently were the following working harder to improve exam results to cope the pressure to produce better exam results (mean = 3.61), just working on it (mean = 3.29) to cope with unrealistic professional demands, trying to understand them (mean = 3.36) to cope with having to associate with co-teachers who are difficult to deal with, managing time better (mean = 3.49) to cope with having to attend to extracurricular activities, working ahead of deadline or have an overtime (mean = 3.33) to cope with working under deadline pressures, and using own resources in schooling (mean = 3.31) to cope with the limited opportunities for further studies. The following were the frequently used coping mechanisms: dealing with every misbehavior and giving the appropriate sanction (mean = 3.42) to cope with dealing with pupils' misbehavior/misconduct, establishing what might have gone wrong (mean = 3.39) to cope with pupils' generally low academic performance, doing intervention activities like remedial teaching to cope with huge gap of pupils' performance, applying differentiated activities/strategies (mean 3.35) to cope with multiple intelligences and different learning styles, employing different techniques in motivating pupils (mean = 3.49) to cope with pupils' lack of interest/poor study habits, and discussing the matter with the concerned school authorities (mean = 3.35) to cope with absenteeism and tardiness among the pupils. The frequently used coping for home-related stressors are: managing time properly to cope with the need to attend to husband or wife and/or children, and accepting the situation and praying (mean= 3.45) to cope with health problems.

The study revealed that there are no significant differences in the sources and level of stress as grouped according to profile variables. Also, the study found significant differences in some of the coping mechanisms employed by the teachers corresponding to particular sources of stress.

As manifested by the Pearson r value of -0.033 with the corresponding p -value of $.590$, there is no significant relationship between the level of stress and sources of stress.

Based on the research results, it is then recommended that Tacloban City Division will adapt the proposed classroom intervention program to lessen, if not eradicate the stress experienced by the public elementary school teachers. The program is an action plan type in a form of matrix focusing on the classroom – related sources of stress and school – related sources as contributory to teachers' stress. Corresponding to these areas of concerns are the strategies on specific objectives, time frame, persons involved, budgetary requirements and source of fund and success indicators or outputs.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The following are the conclusions of the study which are drawn from the major findings.

1. Teaching, in general, is a profession that is very prone to stress considering the different sources at school, classroom and home.
2. Teachers are experiencing high level of stress as a consequence of the many sources. If not managed, negative effects on their job performance might occur such as absenteeism or tardiness in their work.

3. It can be concluded that the teachers are dealing with the stress appropriately, as they are employing mostly positive stress coping mechanisms. Teachers are still maintaining the ethical standards as a professional despite the circumstances.
4. There is, however, evidence that some teachers opt to employ negative coping, but to a minimal extent. It should not be taken for granted since there is an attempt to take stress negatively. It should be prevented to minimize the impact on their job performance.
5. Considering that teaching is a stressful situation, and some teachers opt to employ negative coping, it can be deduced that respective schools need to effectively address such concerns through a classroom intervention program.
6. It can also be concluded that the teachers have similar or common sources of stress which affect them to approximately equal magnitude. However, their ways of coping differed in some aspects, which show their uniqueness in dealing with stressful situations.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Corresponding to the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Schools, preferably through the Guidance Office, need to design and institutionalize stress management program.
2. Regular meetings with a specific purpose of discussing school and classroom-related problems must be conducted.
3. The establishment of teachers' cooperatives in school should be supported as it is a means to augment income of teacher and lessen their financial burden which is one of the potential stressors.
4. A parent-teacher partnership should be enhanced in schools so that parents can help teachers in dealing with students' misconduct and misbehavior, which is also one of the common stressors.
5. Enhancing guidance program related to students' discipline and poor study habits should be done.
6. To address the concerns found in the study which are the classroom-related sources, the following Classroom Intervention Program is recommended for implementation.
7. A similar study is recommended to identify confirm or refute the findings of the study, and to determine other sources of stress and/or to identify better coping strategies than can be used as inputs for a more comprehensive stress management program.

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