

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Diffusing stress caused by work-related experiences among faculty members

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### ABSTRACT

Faculty members experience multifaceted stress due to the convergence of teaching, research, institutional service, and student mentorship obligations. This study explores the emotional and professional consequences of such stressors and analyzes the coping mechanisms employed by faculty to manage these ongoing challenges. Employing a qualitative exploratory design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 faculty members across various academic ranks. Thematic analysis revealed two primary domains: the emotional exhaustion resulting from institutional pressures, and the strategies faculty employ to sustain their well-being. Participants reported a cycle of chronic fatigue, reduced teaching engagement, and diminished job satisfaction, often exacerbated by administrative burden and lack of institutional recognition. While individual coping mechanisms such as time management, boundary-setting, and collegial support provided some relief, their effectiveness was limited in the absence of systemic support. The findings underscore the urgent need for sustained, policy-driven interventions that prioritize faculty well-being to prevent burnout and ensure the continuity and quality of education and related programs.

**Keywords:** Faculty members; work-related stress; emotional exhaustion; coping strategies; faculty well-being; institutional support

## 1. Introduction

The professional responsibilities of teachers have become increasingly complex, involving instructional duties, student supervision, curriculum design, research, and institutional service. These overlapping tasks contribute to elevated levels of work-related stress that can negatively affect faculty well-being and performance. Unlike other academic roles, teacher education faculty are expected to maintain high standards in preparing future educators, which intensifies both emotional and administrative burdens<sup>[1]</sup>. The sustained pressure to meet teaching loads, publish research, and support institutional goals contributes to emotional fatigue. Faculty are often tasked with balancing multiple academic functions while ensuring student outcomes, program quality, and compliance with regulatory standards. Franklin and Harrington<sup>[2]</sup> emphasized that faculty members are vital to institutional effectiveness, yet are increasingly burdened by these competing demands.

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Such persistent strain puts educators at risk of burnout and disengagement from their roles. In the field of education, the role of the teachers is to groom the students intellectually and emotionally, for better learning outcomes. It is important to understand the elements which enhance the performance of the teachers<sup>[3]</sup>.

Unresolved stress in academic professions has been recognized as a long-standing occupational concern. Without effective support mechanisms, it can lead to emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, and professional withdrawal<sup>[4-5]</sup>. The pressure to fulfill institutional expectations without adequate resources accelerates these effects. Nil et al.<sup>[6]</sup> and Shukla<sup>[7]</sup> found that excessive workload and institutional stress contribute to job-related fatigue and attrition in teaching roles.

Emotional exhaustion, a key feature of burnout, stems from the prolonged demands placed on teachers who are expected to maintain consistent student engagement while navigating institutional pressure. These compounded demands gradually impair faculty's focus, resilience, and job satisfaction. Maslach et al.<sup>[8]</sup> stated that this condition impairs judgment, focus, and the ability to sustain professional relationships. In the teaching profession, these effects are amplified due to the high level of engagement faculty must maintain with students. Klusmann<sup>[9]</sup> found that emotional strain, when unmatched by institutional support, leads to decreased morale and performance. Faculty often internalize student challenges, which contributes to stress beyond work hours. The negative consequences of stress are not limited to the individual. Wang et al.<sup>[10]</sup> highlighted that emotional exhaustion among educators reduces teaching motivation and classroom engagement, impacting student learning outcomes. Acedo et al.<sup>[11]</sup> argued that effective education systems rely on healthy professional environments, and Leon et al.<sup>[12]</sup> emphasized that inclusive education goals cannot be achieved without addressing systemic pressures that impair faculty performance.

In this study, work-related stress refers to prolonged emotional and psychological strain that diminishes educators' well-being, job performance, and coping ability<sup>[13, 14]</sup>. While the issue of faculty stress in higher and basic education has been widely discussed, existing literature often generalizes faculty experiences without emphasizing the unique contextual and systemic challenges faced by Faculty members. These include the dual expectations of mentoring future educators and fulfilling institutional mandates, often without commensurate structural support. This study is guided by Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which conceptualizes stress as a product of the appraisal process between perceived demands and available coping resources. This framework provides a dynamic lens through which to analyze how educators experience and manage work-related stressors. Complementing this is the Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Model<sup>[15]</sup>, which emphasizes the balance or imbalance between job demands (e.g., emotional labor, workload, bureaucratic tasks) and job resources (e.g., administrative support, collegial relationships). Together, these models provide a conceptual structure for interpreting faculty experiences and identifying leverage points for institutional intervention.

The study addresses the research gap by focusing specifically on the underexplored emotional and administrative stressors experienced by teachers in the Philippine context. Through a thematic analysis of lived experiences, it contributes a localized, empirical analysis that informs institutional policy and faculty support systems. Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) examine the impact of work-related stress on the emotional well-being, teaching effectiveness, and job satisfaction of faculty members; and (2) explore the coping strategies and institutional support systems they utilize in managing work-related stressors.

## **2. Literature**

### **2.1. Stress and emotional exhaustion in higher education**

Stress has become a defining feature of the professional experience in higher and basic education. The 2023–2024 academic year saw significant reports of job stress, with 59% of educators experiencing persistent pressure and 60% reporting emotional exhaustion<sup>[16]</sup>. Such figures suggest a critical concern for educational institutions, as emotional exhaustion can affect not only the personal lives of faculty but also their performance in teaching, mentoring, and service.

Despite the pervasiveness of academic stress, many institutions lack mechanisms to monitor or respond to faculty well-being. This absence of support continues to be a structural problem even in the post-pandemic academic landscape. According to Deng and Zeng<sup>[17]</sup>, stress among educators has intensified due to unrealistic expectations and role ambiguity. Additionally, Zhou et al.<sup>[18]</sup> highlighted that time poverty and workload intensification are central to ongoing dissatisfaction among academic professionals. These recent studies underscore the importance of sustained institutional reforms, especially as new academic challenges emerge in digital and hybrid learning environments.

## **2.2. Complex academic workload and role strain**

Faculty members are expected to manage a multifaceted academic workload that includes teaching multiple subjects, supervising fieldwork, conducting research, participating in accreditation processes, and handling administrative duties. In some contexts, faculty are even asked to teach outside their specialization, creating further pressure and reducing their sense of professional control<sup>[19-20]</sup>. These overlapping responsibilities often require more time than contract hours allow, contributing to work-life imbalance and mental fatigue.

Ray<sup>[21]</sup> noted that educators operating under prolonged administrative and instructional demands often express reduced satisfaction with their roles. This dissatisfaction may result in declining enthusiasm for teaching or mentoring, which ultimately compromises the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. Similarly, the Oman Ministry of Education<sup>[22]</sup> recognized that top-down educational reforms, while intended to improve outcomes, often introduce new bureaucratic responsibilities that overwhelm faculty without improving institutional support. These reforms inadvertently become another layer of stress for educators expected to implement them.

## **2.3. The emotional impact of professional expectations**

Stress related to professional demands does not only impact productivity; it also directly influences faculty members' emotional responses to their work. Bucoy et al.<sup>[23]</sup> underscored that educators frequently feel undervalued and overextended, particularly when institutional policies fail to consider their emotional capacity. For Teacher Education Faculty, the expectation to serve as mentors, evaluators, and researchers intensifies the burden of emotional labor.

Tarraya<sup>[24]</sup> found that rigid accountability measures<sup>[24]</sup> reduce the autonomy of faculty and their ability to plan instruction creatively. The imposition of performance metrics and standardization interferes with teaching quality and restricts professional judgment. Moreover, Yonas et al.<sup>[25]</sup> reported that emotional fatigue among educators often translates into reduced patience and less meaningful interaction with students. These interpersonal effects further deteriorate the faculty's ability to sustain supportive learning environments, especially within programs focused on teacher development.

Work intensification and technostress have emerged as significant contributors to faculty strain, compounding traditional workload pressures. Research by Atrian and Ghobbeh<sup>[26]</sup> found that technostress significantly impairs job satisfaction and performance, particularly when educators face constant digital demands (e.g., real-time communication, multitasking). Gavade et al.<sup>[27]</sup> emphasize that in under-resourced

contexts informal support networks often replace formal institutional support, yet emotional burden remains high among faculty in hybrid teaching environments. Additionally, a local Philippine study by Cammayo et al.<sup>[28]</sup> reports that online teachers working up to 12 hours daily during the pandemic experienced extreme emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, correlating with high student loads and inadequate support.

## **2.4. Professional identity and emotional exhaustion**

The emotional labor required of faculty member is a core component of their professional identity. Unlike faculty in other disciplines, teacher educators and basic education schools often develop long-term relationships with students through mentoring and practicum supervision. Day<sup>[29]</sup> emphasized the emotional investments embedded in educational work and how they shape professional roles and commitment. However, recent studies emphasize the importance of emotions in understanding teachers' professional experiences<sup>[30-33]</sup>. During initial teacher education (ITE), student-teachers experience a range of emotions that shape their understanding of pedagogy, their commitment to the profession, and their personal well-being in academic settings<sup>[34, 35]</sup>. In early childhood education, these emotional challenges are intensified, as teachers form deep attachments with students and frequently absorb their struggles. When educators internalize students' hardships, the emotional strain persists beyond the classroom, making it difficult for them to recover from daily stressors.

Recent studies highlight how evolving institutional policies and accountability frameworks intensify faculty identity strain. George<sup>[36]</sup> show that online teaching shifts trigger deep identity tensions, particularly when infrastructures and institutional support lag behind increased digital responsibilities. Joel and Eloise<sup>[37]</sup> report that university educators in the Philippines experienced moderate stress during pandemic teaching, with approach-oriented coping (e.g., problem-solving, seeking support) more commonly used than avoidance styles. Ab Wahab et al.<sup>[38]</sup> point to chronic burnout among secondary teachers in the Philippines under "new normal" workloads, adversely affecting professional self-concept and well-being.

## **2.5. Effects of stress on faculty-student relationships**

High levels of professional stress can alter the quality of faculty-student interactions. Chitrakar and P.M.<sup>[39]</sup> observed that emotional strain often leads to reduced patience, limited emotional availability, and less mentoring engagement. This finding is particularly significant in teacher in higher and basic education, where faculty are expected to model professional behavior and provide developmental feedback to students preparing for careers in education. The institutional pressures contributing to faculty stress can also lead to workforce instability. Gibbons<sup>[40]</sup> and Suttles<sup>[41]</sup> documented how growing administrative burdens and reduced autonomy increase faculty turnover. When experienced educators leave these education programs, the continuity of mentorship and curriculum delivery is disrupted, placing additional pressure on remaining staff. The loss of experienced faculty may also erode program quality and weaken institutional memory.

## **2.6. Coping mechanisms and institutional support**

Despite the challenges, faculty members employ various coping mechanisms to manage stress. These include time management strategies, prioritization of tasks, and seeking support from peers. Institutional interventions, such as professional development programs, faculty mentoring systems, and workload adjustments, can enhance these individual strategies if implemented consistently and with administrative backing<sup>[42-46]</sup>.

Recent literature further emphasizes the need for institutional responsibility. For example, Arambala and Avelino<sup>[47]</sup> show that workplace climate, leadership responsiveness, and emotional safety are key predictors of how well faculty adapt to stress. Incorporating these findings supports the growing call for integrated wellness

programs in teacher education institutions. However, Trombly<sup>[48]</sup> cautioned that these support systems are often temporary or inconsistently applied, limiting their long-term impact. Institutional responses must be embedded into structural policy to address the root causes of stress rather than providing only short-term relief. Effective interventions should include regular faculty feedback mechanisms, equitable workload distribution, and mental health support services.

Emotional burden, administrative complexity, and reduced autonomy are consistently linked to elevated stress among academic professionals. Yet, many existing perspectives present a generalized view that fails to reflect the compounded responsibilities uniquely carried by teachers such as mentoring future educators while managing institutional mandates. Despite increasing institutional reforms, the nuances of how these faculty members experience, internalize, and cope with stress particularly in low-resource, culturally specific contexts remain insufficiently explored. This study responds to that absence by offering a localized, thematic analysis of faculty stress experiences and the mechanisms they employ to maintain professional engagement and well-being.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research design**

The study utilized a qualitative exploratory design grounded in empirical data gathered through semi-structured interviews with 25 faculty members. This design allowed for a comprehensive examination of participants' lived experiences concerning emotional exhaustion, institutional pressures, and adaptive strategies. The empirical nature of the study is reinforced through data collected directly from faculty, with insights analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and context-specific stress responses. It moves beyond conceptual review by providing real-world, evidence-based perspectives. Qualitative research is particularly valuable in capturing the nuances of individual experiences and generating rich, context-sensitive data that can inform future studies and institutional policy<sup>[49, 50]</sup>. Through this design, the study aimed to explore how prolonged academic and institutional stress affects faculty performance, motivation, and well-being.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The study involved 25 faculty members selected through purposive sampling. Participants were chosen based on their active engagement in teaching, research, supervision, and service responsibilities within higher and basic education programs. Their professional contexts included mentoring pre-service teachers, preparing licensure candidates, contributing to curriculum and accreditation processes, and managing scholarly output. Participants varied in rank and years of service, offering a broad perspective on how stress and burnout evolve across career stages. The diversity of experiences enabled the study to capture a range of emotional and professional responses to institutional demands. Participation was voluntary, and responses were treated with confidentiality to ensure honest and open sharing of experiences.

#### **3.3. Research instrument**

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to explore how faculty members perceive and manage work-related stress. The questions in **Table 1** focused on three key areas: the emotional and professional impact of stress, the effectiveness of individual coping mechanisms, and the availability and role of institutional support. The guide also examined how faculty members maintain professional integrity and engagement despite ongoing stressors<sup>[51]</sup>. The flexible structure of the interview allowed participants to express their perspectives in their own terms while ensuring consistency in data collection. Prior to implementation, the guide was reviewed to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives<sup>[52]</sup>.

**Table 1.** Instrument of the study

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
To examine the impact of work-related stress on the emotional well-being, teaching effectiveness, and job satisfaction of faculty members.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does work-related stress affect your emotional well-being, both during and beyond your academic responsibilities?</li> <li>2. In what ways has stress influenced your teaching, research productivity, mentoring, or service involvement?</li> <li>3. Have you observed any changes in your job satisfaction as a result of academic or institutional stressors? Explain.</li> </ol>
To explore the coping strategies and support systems utilized by faculty members in managing stress caused by work-related responsibilities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What specific strategies or practices do you use to manage work-related stress in your role as a faculty member?</li> <li>2. Can you describe an experience when you successfully coped with a stressful academic situation? What helped you manage it effectively?</li> <li>3. What types of support (collegial, administrative, personal) do you find most helpful in reducing stress related to your academic responsibilities?</li> </ol>

### **3.4. Data gathering procedure**

The study employed individual semi-structured interviews to gather detailed insights from faculty members. This method allowed participants to share their personal experiences, emotional challenges, and coping practices related to work-related stress. Each interview was conducted in a private and comfortable environment, either face-to-face or virtually, to ensure that participants felt safe in expressing their honest reflections.

Sufficient time was allocated for each session, allowing respondents to elaborate on their stressors and strategies without time constraints. Participants were encouraged to describe not only the nature of their stress but also how it affected their academic performance, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' informed consent to preserve the accuracy of data for later analysis<sup>[53]</sup>. The researcher maintained neutrality<sup>[53]</sup> and avoided leading questions to ensure the authenticity of responses.

### **3.5. Data analysis**

The study utilized reflexive thematic analysis to examine the collected data. This method involved transcribing interviews verbatim and systematically coding each response to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and themes. Thematic analysis was chosen due to its flexibility in capturing the depth and variation of participants' lived experiences with stress and coping in academic context<sup>[54]</sup>. Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the shared and unique experiences of faculty members. This process helped uncover both common challenges and context-specific responses to work-related stress within teacher education programs.

### **3.6. Ethical considerations**

To uphold the ethical integrity of the research, comprehensive protocols were followed throughout the study. Participants were informed of the research purpose, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. All data, including audio recordings and transcripts, were securely stored and treated with strict confidentiality. Identifying information was removed to protect participant anonymity. Only the researcher had access to the raw data, ensuring that personal disclosures remained private<sup>[55]</sup>. These measures were taken to foster trust and openness during interviews and to ensure that faculty members could speak freely about sensitive experiences without fear of professional consequences.

## 4. Results

**Research Objectives 1.** To examine the impact of work-related stress on the emotional well-being, teaching effectiveness, and job satisfaction of faculty members.

**Question No. 1.** How does work-related stress affect your emotional well-being, both during and beyond your academic responsibilities?

### *1.1 Burnout and Exhaustion*

Twenty-three (23) faculty members described experiencing mental and emotional exhaustion due to overlapping academic demands, including teaching loads, student supervision, administrative duties, and research output. Many noted that their physical and emotional energy is significantly depleted by the end of the day, making it difficult to engage in family or personal time. The persistence of institutional demands outside formal working hours contributes to a cycle of chronic fatigue. This level of stress often leaves them unable to fully detach from work, even during rest periods, leading to a sense of emotional numbness and detachment from both their professional and personal lives.

"The constant pressure to meet testing standards, keep up with paperwork, and manage large class sizes leaves me mentally and emotionally drained."

"Outside of work, I struggle with exhaustion and often don't have the energy to enjoy time with my family."

### *1.2 Passion for Teaching but Struggles with Workload*

Nineteen (19) respondents expressed that their passion for teaching is the only reason they remain in the profession. They find joy in working with students and making a difference, but the overwhelming workload drains them. Long hours at school followed by additional work at home leave them physically and mentally exhausted. Their personal time is scarce, with weekends often spent catching up instead of resting. While they don't want to leave teaching, the constant fatigue makes them feel as though they are running on empty. This underscores the ongoing difficulty of sustaining a love for teaching while managing excessive demands.

"The joy I get from teaching is the only thing keeping me in this profession. I love my students, and I love making a difference, but the workload is crushing."

"I don't want to leave teaching, but I also don't want to feel like I'm running on empty every single day."

### *1.3 Emotional Attachment to Students and Work-Life Balance Challenges*

Eleven (11) faculty members discussed the emotional demands of mentoring pre-service teachers and dealing with students' personal and academic concerns. Many feel a strong obligation to provide emotional support to their students, especially during practicum placements, licensure reviews, or personal struggles. This responsibility, while fulfilling, becomes emotionally draining when faculty members are also managing their own stress. Several respondents noted that they find themselves unable to disengage from student concerns, even after work hours, leading to emotional carryover that negatively impacts their family life, sleep, and mental health.

" I form close bonds with my students, and their struggles become my struggles. If a child is going through a tough time at home, I carry that emotional weight with me even after I leave work. "

"I love what I do, but sometimes it feels like I give so much of myself that I don't have anything left for my own well-being."

**Question No. 2.** In what ways has stress influenced your teaching, research productivity, mentoring, or service involvement?

### *2.1 Reduced Patience and Emotional Fatigue*

Twenty (20) faculty members admitted that when stress levels rise, their patience wears thin, and their engagement with students or colleagues declines. Some felt that their capacity to give thoughtful feedback or maintain presence in meetings diminished under pressure. The pressure of deadlines and administrative tasks often leads them to rush lessons or struggle to provide individual support; stress weakens both teaching effectiveness and the emotional connection between teachers and students, making it harder to maintain a nurturing learning environment.

"When I'm stressed, my patience runs thin, and I notice that I'm not as warm or engaging as I usually am. I try to hide it, but students can tell when I'm overwhelmed."

"I hate feeling like I'm not giving my best, but the workload and stress make it difficult to be the teacher I want to be."

### *2.2 Compromised Creativity and Teaching Engagement*

Seventeen (17) faculty members noted that academic stress limits their creativity in course design and delivery. Instead of engaging activities or innovative assessments, they resort to basic or more structured approaches due to mental fatigue and time constraints. The frustration of wanting to provide the best education while being constrained by stress makes it difficult to meet their own teaching standards. This emphasizes how stress hinders creativity in early childhood education, limiting the dynamic, student-centered learning experiences that young children need to thrive.

"Stress takes away the creativity that makes teaching fun. When I'm feeling overwhelmed, I rely more on structured activities instead of interactive or play-based learning."

"It's frustrating because I want to give them the best learning experience possible, but stress makes it harder to be the kind of teacher I aspire to be."

### *2.3 Overcompensation Leading to Burnout*

Twelve (12) respondents shared that they overcompensate for stress by pushing themselves harder, working late into the night to meet expectations. While this keeps up performance in the short term, it results in burnout and personal health decline. The constant strain makes them question the long-term sustainability of their profession. This reveals the hidden toll on teachers who push through stress, only to find themselves on the verge of burnout.

"I tend to overcompensate when I'm stressed I put even more effort into my lessons, trying to stay upbeat and engaged so my students don't notice. But it comes at a cost."

"The stress makes me question how sustainable this job is in the long run."

**Question No. 3.** Have you observed any changes in your job satisfaction as a result of academic or institutional stressors? Explain



### *3.1 Diminishing Enthusiasm and Commitment*

Nineteen (19) faculty members reported that the academic workload and institutional pressures gradually eroded their initial enthusiasm for the profession. What once felt meaningful has become routine and exhausting. Many admitted considering whether they could remain in the field long-term. The pressure to meet unrealistic expectations has taken a toll, leading them to reconsider whether teaching is still the right path. This underscores how systemic challenges are gradually eroding teachers' passion, pushing many to reassess their commitment to the field.

"I used to love teaching it felt like my calling. But over time, the constant stress of standardized testing, large class sizes, and endless paperwork has worn me down."

"The pressure to meet unrealistic expectations has made me question if this is the career I want to stay in long-term."

### *3.2 Emotional Exhaustion Undermining Job Fulfillment*

Twenty (20) participants expressed that emotional strain from student issues, administrative expectations, and continuous workload has dampened their sense of professional fulfillment. Some no longer feel energized by tasks they once enjoyed. This highlights how emotional exhaustion is diminishing job satisfaction, making it harder for educators to sustain their passion for teaching.

"I love working with young children, but the emotional weight of the job has started to wear on me. It's heartbreaking to see students dealing with difficult home lives, and I carry that stress with me."

"Some days, I feel like I'm giving everything I have, yet it's still not enough. I used to feel energized by my work, but now I often feel drained before the day even starts."

### *3.3 Continued Passion, Frustration with Institutional Systems*

Thirteen (13) respondents noted that their love for working with students remains strong, but the increasing demands beyond teaching data tracking, meetings, and administrative work have diminished their enjoyment of the profession. They feel like they spend more time justifying their effectiveness than actually engaging with their students. This frustration stems from knowing they make a difference, yet systemic pressures often overshadow that fulfillment. This emphasizes how structural issues are dampening the enthusiasm of passionate educators, leaving them feeling overburdened and unmotivated.

"I still love working with my students, and that part hasn't changed. But the growing demands outside the classroom data tracking, meetings, and administrative tasks have taken the joy out of teaching."

"I feel like I spend more time proving I'm a good teacher than actually teaching. It's frustrating because I know I make a difference, but the stress sometimes overshadows that feeling."

**Research Objectives 2.** To explore the coping strategies and support systems utilized by faculty members in managing stress caused by work-related responsibilities.

**Question No. 1.** What specific strategies or practices do you use to manage work-related stress in your role as a faculty member?

### *Staying Organized to Reduce Overwhelm*

Eighteen (18) respondents emphasized that maintaining organization significantly alleviates stress. They rely on planners to structure lesson plans, grading schedules, and meetings, ensuring tasks remain manageable. Establishing small, daily goals prevents them from becoming overwhelmed and allows them to systematically complete their responsibilities. Structuring their workload effectively, they can maintain focus and reduce stress, ultimately enhancing their ability to support their students.

"One of my biggest stress relievers is staying organized. I use a planner to map out lesson plans, grading schedules, and meetings, so I don't feel like everything is piling up at once"

" Breaking tasks into manageable steps helps me feel more in control and less overwhelmed."

### *1.2 Setting Boundaries to Protect Personal Time*

Fifteen (15) respondents stressed the importance of setting clear boundaries between work and personal life. They establish strict cut-off times for work-related activities, refrain from checking emails beyond a certain hour, and minimize taking work home. Initially, maintaining these boundaries was difficult, but they recognized that constant exhaustion hindered their effectiveness as educators. Prioritizing personal time has allowed them to maintain their mental and emotional well-being, ensuring they remain engaged and effective in the classroom.

"I've learned to set firm boundaries between work and home. I no longer check emails after a certain time, and I avoid bringing work home whenever possible."

"It was hard at first, but I realized I can't be an effective teacher if I'm constantly burned out. Prioritizing my personal time has helped me stay mentally and emotionally balanced."

### *1.3 Leaning on Colleagues for Support*

Twenty two (22) respondents highlighted that building strong professional relationships with colleagues has been crucial in managing stress. Having a network of fellow teachers who understand the demands of the job allows them to share concerns, exchange advice, and offer support when needed. Engaging in open conversations and collaborative problem-solving reduces emotional strain and fosters a supportive work environment. Strengthening these connections has proven essential in navigating the challenges of teaching.

"I've found that talking to other teachers who understand the challenges of the job makes a huge difference."

"We vent, share advice, and even help each other out when one of us is feeling overwhelmed. Knowing that I'm not alone in my struggles helps lighten the emotional burden of teaching."

**Question No. 2.** Can you describe an experience when you successfully coped with a stressful academic situation? What helped you manage it effectively?

### *2.1 Managing a Last-Minute Schedule Change*

Sixteen (16) respondents shared their experience of arriving at school only to find their schedules abruptly altered due to an unforeseen event. Faced with the challenge of adjusting their lesson plans on short notice, they focused on prioritizing essential activities while ensuring students remained engaged. Maintaining

composure and embracing flexibility allowed them to adapt to the situation without unnecessary stress. Their ability to remain calm and organized in unpredictable circumstances proved to be a valuable asset in handling workplace challenges.

" I had to adjust my lesson plans on the spot and make sure my students still had a productive day. Instead of panicking, I took a deep breath, prioritized the most essential activities, and remained flexible."

" What helped me cope was reminding myself that unexpected changes happen, and the key is to stay calm and adapt."

### *2.2 Handling a Challenging Parent-Teacher Conference*

Twenty (20) respondents recalled a difficult conversation with a parent who was frustrated about their child's academic performance. The interaction was tense, but rather than responding emotionally, they actively listened, acknowledged the parent's concerns, and worked towards a constructive resolution. Maintaining a professional and patient approach helped ease the situation and facilitate a productive discussion. Seeking support from a colleague afterward allowed them to process the experience and move forward with a clear perspective.

" Instead of reacting emotionally, I listened carefully, acknowledged their concerns, and focused on finding solutions together. "

"Staying patient and professional helped de-escalate the situation. Afterward, I debriefed with a colleague, which helped me process the stress and move forward."

### *2.3 Overcoming Burnout Through Time Management*

Fourteen (14) respondents described experiencing extreme exhaustion due to the demands of lesson planning, grading, and meetings. To regain control, they implemented structured time limits for tasks and set firm boundaries on additional responsibilities. Recognizing that striving for perfection in every aspect was unrealistic helped them shift their priorities and manage stress more effectively. Establishing a balanced workload enabled them to maintain both productivity and well-being.

"I was juggling lesson planning, grading, and meetings, and I felt completely overwhelmed. I knew I had to make a change, so I started setting strict time limits for grading and planning, and I learned to say no to extra responsibilities. "

"What helped me cope was realizing that I can't do everything perfectly, and that's okay. Setting boundaries allowed me to regain control and feel less burned out."

**Question No. 3.** What types of support (collegial, administrative, personal) do you find most helpful in reducing stress related to your academic responsibilities

### *3.1 Administrative Support and Understanding*

Twenty five (25) respondents highlighted that having a supportive administration significantly reduces stress. When school leaders acknowledge teachers' challenges and take proactive steps such as checking in regularly, minimizing unnecessary meetings, and advocating for better resources, it creates a more manageable work environment. They emphasized that feeling trusted and valued by administrators makes a substantial difference, allowing them to focus on their responsibilities without unnecessary pressure. These responses underscore the importance of strong administrative support in fostering a positive and sustainable teaching environment.

"When administration acknowledges the challenges, we face and takes steps to support us, it makes a huge impact. "

"Feeling valued and heard by leadership helps ease stress and makes the workload feel more manageable."

### *3.2 Emotional Support from Family and Friends*

Twenty three (23) respondents shared that having a strong personal support system plays a crucial role in managing the emotional demands of teaching. Spending time with family and close friends allows them to separate work stress from home life and maintain a sense of balance. Engaging in conversations, receiving encouragement, and participating in enjoyable activities help them reset after long days in the classroom. Whether through shared meals, watching movies, or simply talking about non-work-related topics, these moments provide emotional relief and reinforce their motivation for teaching. These responses highlight the significance of external emotional support in sustaining educators' well-being.

"Teaching young children can be emotionally draining, so I rely on my family and close friends to recharge. Having a strong personal support system helps me separate work stress from home life. "

"Talking about my day, getting reassurance, and doing activities I enjoy with loved ones keeps me grounded."

### *3.3 Professional Development and Mentorship*

Thirteen (13) respondents emphasized that mentorship from experienced educators has been one of the most valuable forms of support. Receiving guidance on lesson planning, behavior management, and self-care strategies has helped them navigate their responsibilities more effectively. They also noted that participating in professional development workshops enhances their confidence and preparedness in the classroom. These responses highlight that continuous learning and mentorship provide essential tools for early childhood educators, equipping them to handle challenges with greater ease and efficiency.

"One of the best supports I've had is mentorship from experienced teachers. Having someone to turn to for advice on lesson planning, behavior management, and self-care strategies has been a game-changer."

"Professional development workshops also help me feel more prepared and confident, reducing my stress in the classroom."

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1. Manifestation of stress and emotional exhaustion**

The findings clearly demonstrate that faculty members face a significant degree of work-related stress, which directly affects their emotional health, job satisfaction, and professional engagement. Faculty reported frequent experiences of burnout and emotional depletion as a result of excessive workloads, administrative obligations, and high performance expectations. These outcomes affirm the assertions of Marvi and Baghari<sup>[56]</sup> who identified emotional exhaustion as a common consequence of anxiety, unrealistic demands, and insufficient external support. Many participants expressed difficulty sustaining emotional energy throughout the workday, often struggling with patience and motivation in their academic roles. This exhaustion reflects a deeper psychological strain, wherein the persistent nature of institutional expectations impairs recovery and undermines professional enthusiasm. Over time, faculty described becoming emotionally detached and

unmotivated, no longer finding satisfaction in tasks they once found meaningful. The loss of passion and vitality in the workplace indicates how sustained stress can erode the foundational purpose of teaching.

Stress also disrupted faculty members' ability to maintain effective and responsive instructional practices. Numerous participants acknowledged that their teaching quality suffered when stress levels were high, as they became less patient, less engaged, and more prone to rushed or standardized delivery. This supports the findings of Wettstein et al.<sup>[57]</sup>, who noted that elevated stress impairs the ability to manage classroom interactions effectively. Under pressure, faculty often sacrificed individualized feedback, creative approaches, and emotional availability, all of which are critical to student success and learning outcomes. As stress accumulated, instructors were more likely to adopt rigid, time-saving teaching strategies that limited learner interaction. Kamran et al.<sup>[58]</sup> emphasized that such compromises weaken the educational experience, particularly when instructors can no longer maintain dynamic and responsive pedagogy. The diminished instructional presence not only affects faculty identity but also has implications for academic culture and student development.

Furthermore, the findings indicate a steady erosion of professional motivation caused by chronic institutional stress. Faculty initially driven by a sense of purpose reported that persistent demands, lack of acknowledgment, and unrealistic expectations gradually undermined their commitment. As Su<sup>[59]</sup> explained, the evolving role of educators now includes navigating systemic burdens that hinder rather than support personal motivation. Respondents described feeling undervalued, overextended, and emotionally spent, which led many to question their long-term place in academia. When personal dedication is met with institutional disregard, the outcome is a progressive decline in morale and professional integrity<sup>[60]</sup>. This condition highlights the urgent need for structural changes that reaffirm educators' value and provide relief from unsustainable workloads. Without such intervention, the risk of disengagement and attrition among faculty will only intensify, threatening long-term sustainability.

## **5.2. Coping mechanisms and stress management strategies**

To combat the adverse effects of stress, educators employed various coping mechanisms, ranging from self-initiated strategies to institutional and social support systems. The World Health Organization<sup>[61]</sup> defines stress as "a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation," highlighting its negative impact on both physical and mental health. Primary teachers consistently report some of the highest levels of work-related stress, while Stansfeld et al.<sup>[62]</sup> found that educators face an above-average risk of developing mental health issues due to occupational demands. A common coping strategy among teachers was staying organized.

Stress management also varied according to personal preferences, particularly in terms of emotional regulation and social connection. Many faculty described setting boundaries such as refusing to engage in work-related activities outside of designated hours, as a way to protect their mental health. Others turned to supportive relationships with peers, friends, or family to express emotional frustrations and gain perspective. These findings are supported by Emeljanovas et al.<sup>[63]</sup>, who noted that strong interpersonal connections are essential to emotional resilience in high-pressure professions. Peer support in particular allowed faculty to share experiences, validate challenges, and receive constructive feedback. Van der Meulen et al.<sup>[64]</sup> and Kaihoi et al.<sup>[65]</sup> both emphasized that collegial networks can strengthen teachers' ability to cope with institutional pressures by reducing isolation and promoting emotional solidarity.

While coping strategies offered temporary relief, they were not uniformly sufficient in addressing the broader institutional causes of stress. Several faculty members described the limitations of relying solely on personal discipline or emotional support, especially in the absence of institutional change. According to Duckworth et al.<sup>[66]</sup>, coping without structural backing often left individuals exhausted from self-regulation,

even when they appeared outwardly functional. This underscores a structural imbalance: educators are expected to self-regulate stress within systems that offer insufficient institutional safeguards. Without formal recognition of workload issues and psychological stressors, faculty are left to privately manage what is ultimately a systemic concern.

### **5.3. Institutional support and its role in stress management**

Institutional support emerged as a defining factor in whether faculty were able to effectively manage or succumb to work-related stress. Leadership responsiveness, in particular, was a recurring theme. Coronado-Maldonado et al.<sup>[67]</sup> demonstrated that emotional intelligence and transformational leadership significantly influence teachers' performance and resilience in high-stress environments. This aligns with the study's findings, as faculty emphasized the need for administrators who model empathy, strategic flexibility, and relational leadership. Their emotional connection to leadership decisions influenced how they perceived institutional support. As supported by Bottiani et al.<sup>[68]</sup> and Kinman et al.<sup>[69]</sup>, collegial and leadership-based support functions as a critical protective layer against emotional fatigue. Faculty described that simple gestures such as check-ins, workload adjustments, and acknowledgment of effort significantly improved their morale. These actions fostered a sense of belonging and value, which mitigated feelings of burnout and professional isolation. When leadership recognized and responded to stress signals, faculty were more inclined to remain committed to their roles and maintain a high standard of performance.

Conversely, the absence of administrative care led to a sharp increase in emotional exhaustion and disengagement. Many faculty expressed frustration over being required to meet excessive expectations without meaningful support or mental health resources. This absence of systemic concern intensified feelings of abandonment and hopelessness, leading several respondents to consider career shifts or resignations. The findings align with Durrani et al.<sup>[70]</sup>, who cautioned that temporary or inconsistent support systems are insufficient for long-term faculty sustainability. Without formalized well-being initiatives and institutional mechanisms for psychological care, the effectiveness of personal coping efforts remains limited<sup>[71]</sup>. Faculty are not merely asking for sympathy they require structural solutions that reflect the seriousness of academic stress. Only with consistent, policy-based interventions can the cycle of burnout and dissatisfaction be disrupted and replaced with a culture of well-being and retention.

### **5.4. Impact of coping mechanisms on teacher well-being**

The results further show that coping strategies, when supported by the institutional environment, significantly contribute to the preservation of faculty well-being and sustained professional engagement. Educators who reported using time management, boundary-setting, and peer communication in tandem with supportive leadership experienced greater resilience. These integrated approaches prevented emotional exhaustion from escalating into professional detachment. In such environments, faculty retained a sense of purpose and competence, contributing positively to both their own well-being and the academic community<sup>[72]</sup>. The reinforcing nature of combined personal and institutional efforts proves essential for balancing productivity with sustainability.

On the other hand, in settings where institutional backing was absent, the burden of managing stress fell entirely on individual faculty. Teachers' well-being has become a global concern, particularly due to rising cases of stress-related absences and attrition across various educational systems<sup>[73]</sup>. Even the most well-intentioned personal strategies faltered under unrelenting institutional pressure. These findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive, long-term well-being frameworks at the organizational level. Supporting faculty well-being is not a one-time intervention but a continuous responsibility that must be embedded in school policy and culture.

## 6. Conclusions

This study affirms that work-related stress among faculty members is a pervasive and deeply rooted concern that significantly affects emotional well-being, instructional effectiveness, and job satisfaction. Faculty members face overlapping responsibilities that include teaching, student mentoring, research, and administrative tasks, resulting in chronic emotional exhaustion and diminished professional engagement. The findings revealed that the cumulative impact of institutional pressures disrupts faculty members' ability to sustain high-quality teaching and erodes their long-term commitment to the profession.

In response to these challenges, educators employ coping strategies such as time management, boundary-setting, and peer support. While these strategies provide short-term relief, they are insufficient in mitigating the long-term effects of stress in the absence of formal institutional support. The data underscore that individual resilience must be reinforced by system-wide changes that prioritize faculty well-being.

To effectively diffuse work-related stress among teachers, academic institutions must adopt comprehensive and policy-driven support frameworks. These should include equitable workload distribution, access to mental health services, leadership that practices empathy and responsiveness, and structured recognition of faculty contributions. Without such systemic interventions, even the most dedicated faculty are at risk of burnout, professional disengagement, or attrition.

Future research should examine the longitudinal outcomes of institutional well-being initiatives and develop context-specific models tailored to the realities of teachers. Strengthening faculty well-being is not only a moral imperative, it is a strategic investment in ensuring the sustainability, effectiveness, and quality of teacher education programs.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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