

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO STRESS IN RELATION TO MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG TEACHERS AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, MISAMIS ORIENTAL

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ABSTRACT

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This study examined the factors contributing to stress and their relationship with the mental health conditions of college teachers in local higher education institutions in Misamis Oriental during the COVID-19 pandemic. A quantitative descriptive-correlational approach was used. Data were obtained from 246 instructors via a validated, structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results indicated that the most adopted instructional mode throughout the epidemic was blended

learning. In general, the identified stressors were considered by instructors to contribute to a modest degree, with fear of contagion, working conditions, and health status being the most prevalent. The respondents also had a moderate level of mental health status, as anxiety had the highest mean among the measured psychological aspects. The results also showed a strong correlation between the learning modalities used and teachers' mental health status, indicating that variations in teaching delivery may be associated with changes in psychological well-being. Overall, the results underscore the complex nature



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of job stress experienced by college instructors amid a health emergency and highlight the importance of institutional wellness programs, psychosocial support services, and responsive organizational policies that promote faculty resilience and sustain a healthy teaching climate in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic changed educational systems globally, forcing higher education institutions to swiftly adapt from conventional classroom teaching to flexible, technology-mediated learning environments. Never before have instructors had to change their instructional tactics so quickly, learn new digital platforms, and follow shifting public health protocols all at the same time. While these developments provided continuity of education, they also introduced new professional expectations that threatened teachers' physical, emotional, and psychological well-being (UNESCO, 2021).

The workload, varied roles, administrative duties, and the constant engagement with learners have always made teaching a profession known for work-related stress. Existing issues were compounded by health concerns, remote instruction, technology, job security, and work-life balance during the pandemic. The rapid shift to blended and online modalities increased teachers' vulnerability to stress and mental health problems, as they were forced to take on multiple roles while confronting uncertainty and maintaining instructional quality (Kim & Asbury, 2020). Stress is a normal psychological response to challenges. However, when one is exposed to stressors over a long period of time without enough resources to cope with them, it can negatively affect mental health and professional functioning. "Teachers were dealing with so many unknowns during the pandemic that they were feeling anxious, helpless, disappointed, and irritable regularly." These psychological reactions can impair teachers' personal health and may also affect motivation, instructional delivery, interpersonal connections, and the overall quality of education (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

Emerging data show that a mix of individual and organizational factors, including working environment, perceived health hazards, social ties, economic concerns and fear of contagion, influences teachers' mental health. A Job Demands–Resources viewpoint implies that high job demands paired with low organizational resources are more prone to lead to occupational stress and emotional tiredness (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Similarly, positive organizational support and adaptive coping strategies enhance resilience and psychological well-being, enabling teachers to function effectively in challenging situations.

In the Philippine scenario, higher education institutions had lengthy interruptions, and faculty members had to quickly adjust to modular, asynchronous, synchronous, and hybrid learning modes. Teachers had to go beyond their teaching responsibilities to grasp digital technology, restructure

examinations, give psychological support to students, and juggle professional commitments with personal and family problems. Different stress levels and mental health issues can stem from the various expectations that are placed on educators. This points to the need to know what affects the overall well-being of educators.

Although there has been several research on the psychological impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic on healthcare workers and the general community, there have been comparatively few studies on college professors, especially in local higher education institutions in the Philippines. The existing literature has predominantly focused on teacher stress or mental health individually, with insufficient emphasis paid to the interaction of variables underpinning stress and mental health issues across various demographic and occupational attributes. There is still a paucity of localized evidence from such institutions, despite the specific organizational and contextual problems faced by instructors in public local colleges.

This study seeks to solve this problem by investigating the variables of stress and its association with the mental health problems of local college instructors in Misamis Oriental during the COVID-19 epidemic. The outcome is expected to provide empirical evidence to inform institutional policies, teacher wellness programs, psychosocial support, and crisis preparedness efforts, thereby improving faculty resilience and fostering healthier educational environments during public health emergencies and other disruptive events.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The study is based on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping Theory, the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Theory, and the Mental Health Continuum Theory, which explain teachers' occupational stress and psychological well-being during educational disruption. These theoretical views offer a holistic picture of the interplay among stress, individual assessment, organizational resources, and mental health outcomes among college teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study's major theoretical basis is the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The idea views stress as a dynamic process arising from an individual's evaluation of environmental demands and available resources to cope. In this view, stressful situations do not intrinsically generate anguish; rather, people appraise whether a situation poses a danger to their welfare and whether they have the means to cope with it. Teachers experienced rapid shifts to online and flexible learning, which increased workloads, health concerns, and technical issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their psychological reactions largely hinged on how they perceived and managed these pressures through adaptive coping mechanisms.

This view is reinforced by the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Theory, suggested by Demerouti et al. (2001) and further developed by Bakker

and Demerouti (2017). The idea suggests that each employment comprises job demands and job resources, which impact employee well-being and performance. Job demands include excessive workload, role uncertainty, technology adaption, emotional labor, etc. Such tasks need constant physical and psychological effort. If the organization is under-resourced, it might create stress and burnout. By contrast, work resources such as supportive leadership, collegial relationships, technical assistance, and chances for professional growth moderate the negative effects of occupational stress and build engagement and resilience. These organizational methods are particularly significant for the well-being of teachers in higher education in times of crisis.

In addition, the study employs Keyes's (2002) Mental Health Continuum Theory, which conceptualizes mental health as a multifaceted construct rather than merely the absence of mental illness. The idea highlights that individuals may have varied levels of emotional, psychological, and social well-being even in the presence of stressful life circumstances. Given sufficient institutional support and the use of effective coping techniques, teachers may continue to work successfully and retain good mental health even in the face of educational obstacles of unprecedented proportions. This view moves beyond just detecting psychological discomfort to understanding the elements that foster resilience and thriving in the workplace.

Collectively, these ideas imply that teachers' mental health during the COVID-19 epidemic is a function of the combination of individual assessment processes, workplace expectations and resources, and general psychological well-being. A theoretical understanding of these associations would aid in exploring the factors that lead to stress and their relationship to teachers' mental health conditions and would inform institutional policies and wellness interventions that promote educator resilience and organizational effectiveness.

In summary, these theories propose that the relationship between occupational demands and individual assessment processes, as well as the organizational resources available to teachers, is related to teachers' mental health. This integrated view provides the conceptual framework for studying the relationship between stress-related factors and the psychological well-being of instructors in higher education institutions.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Factors Contributing to Teachers' Stress. Teaching is widely recognized as a profession characterized by high cognitive, emotional, and organizational demands. Beyond instructional responsibilities, teachers serve multiple roles, including assessment, student support, administrative tasks, curriculum planning, and stakeholder engagement. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these responsibilities expanded considerably as educators adapted to remote and flexible learning environments while managing uncertainties related

to health and employment. International evidence suggests that workload, technological adaptation, work-life imbalance, and organizational expectations significantly contributed to elevated stress levels among educators. Kim and Asbury (2020) reported that teachers experienced substantial professional uncertainty during the early stages of the pandemic, describing rapid instructional changes and increased responsibilities as major sources of stress. Similar findings by Pressley (2021) indicated that increased workload and concerns about instructional effectiveness were associated with higher levels of teacher stress and emotional exhaustion.

In addition to occupational demands, personal and environmental factors such as fear of infection, family responsibilities, financial concerns, and social isolation further intensified psychological strain among educators. These findings demonstrate that teacher stress is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by both workplace and personal contexts.

Teachers' Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the mental health of educators worldwide. Studies consistently report increased prevalence of anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, sleep disturbances, and psychological distress among teachers who were required to transition to online and blended learning environments rapidly.

The World Health Organization (2022) recognizes mental health as an essential component of overall well-being, enabling individuals to cope with everyday stresses, work productively, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Maintaining positive mental health is therefore fundamental to sustaining educational quality and organizational resilience.

A systematic review conducted by Minihan et al. (2022) found that teachers experienced elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout during the pandemic, with workload, technological demands, and concerns for student learning emerging as the most common contributing factors. However, the review also emphasized that organizational support, positive collegial relationships, and adaptive coping strategies served as protective factors that promoted resilience and psychological well-being.

Learning Modality and Occupational Stress. The abrupt implementation of online, modular, and blended learning modalities required educators to acquire new technological competencies while redesigning instructional materials and assessment practices. These transitions presented significant challenges, particularly among teachers with limited technological experience or inadequate institutional support.

Research by König et al. (2020) demonstrated that teachers' readiness for digital instruction varied considerably and that insufficient technological competence increased stress and reduced confidence in delivering quality instruction. Conversely, teachers who perceived stronger institutional support reported greater adaptability and lower psychological distress during the transition to online learning.

These findings highlight the importance of organizational preparedness and professional development in mitigating occupational stress during educational emergencies.

Organizational Support and Teacher Well-Being. Organizational support has emerged as a critical protective factor for teachers' mental health. Supportive leadership, collaborative work environments, access to technology, professional development opportunities, and psychosocial services contribute to teachers' resilience and job satisfaction. Bakker and Demerouti (2017) argued that job resources not only reduce the negative effects of occupational demands but also enhance employee engagement and motivation. Within educational settings, supportive organizational practices foster teachers' capacity to adapt to changing instructional environments while maintaining positive psychological functioning.

Institutions that prioritize employee wellness through counseling services, peer support programs, flexible work arrangements, and professional learning opportunities are better positioned to sustain teacher well-being and instructional effectiveness during periods of uncertainty.

The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that teachers' stress and mental health are influenced by a complex interaction of occupational demands, organizational resources, personal characteristics, and educational contexts. While numerous studies have investigated teacher stress and psychological well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic, much of the existing evidence originates from developed countries. It focuses primarily on stress, burnout, or anxiety independently.

Relatively limited research has simultaneously examined the factors contributing to stress and their relationship with teachers' mental health conditions within local higher education institutions in the Philippines. Moreover, empirical evidence from local colleges remains scarce despite the unique organizational structures, resource constraints, and community contexts in which these institutions operate. Addressing this gap, the present study provides localized evidence on the relationship between stress-contributing factors and teachers' mental health in local colleges in Misamis Oriental, thereby informing the development of evidence-based faculty wellness programs and institutional mental health policies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study employed a **quantitative descriptive-correlational research design** to examine the factors contributing to stress and their relationship with the mental health conditions of teachers in local colleges in Misamis Oriental during the COVID-19 pandemic. The descriptive component was used to assess the extent of stress-related factors and teachers' mental health conditions. In contrast, the correlational component examined relationships between these variables and selected demographic characteristics,

without manipulating existing conditions. This design is appropriate for describing naturally occurring phenomena and identifying significant associations among variables within a specific educational context.

Research Environment. The study was conducted in selected **local colleges in the Province of Misamis Oriental, Philippines**. These higher education institutions adopted various learning modalities, including online, modular, blended, and limited face-to-face instruction, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The educational setting provided an appropriate context for examining teachers' occupational stress and mental health conditions amid rapidly changing instructional and organizational demands.

Research Respondents. The respondents are college instructors engaged in local higher education institutions in Misamis Oriental during the implementation of flexible learning modalities. The participants in this study were full- and part-time instructors who remained actively engaged in their teaching duties during the epidemic. The sample size needed was calculated using a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to ensure adequate representation from the participating universities. Within each university, respondents were picked by computer-generated randomization, giving all qualified professors an equal chance to participate and reducing sampling bias.

Research Instrument. Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising four sections. The first section collected demographic information, including age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, years of teaching experience, employment status, and learning modality adopted during the pandemic. The second section measured the factors contributing to stress, encompassing workload, technological demands, organizational support, health concerns, family responsibilities, and work-related adjustments associated with COVID-19.

The third section assessed the mental health conditions of teachers, focusing on indicators such as anxiety, emotional well-being, stress symptoms, coping capacity, and psychological functioning. The fourth section included items related to institutional support and coping practices that provided additional context for interpreting teachers' mental health experiences.

The instrument was adapted from established occupational stress and mental health frameworks and underwent content validation by experts in education, psychology, and research methodology. Prior to data collection, pilot testing was conducted with teachers outside the study area, demonstrating satisfactory internal consistency and confirming the instrument's suitability for the study.

Data Collection Procedures. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the administrators of the participating local colleges before the distribution of the questionnaires. After securing institutional approval, respondents received an explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, ethical considerations, and voluntary nature of participation.

Data collection was conducted through personally administered and electronically distributed questionnaires, depending on prevailing public health protocols and institutional policies. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the instrument, and completed questionnaires were retrieved, reviewed for completeness, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Statistical Treatment of Data. Descriptive statistics, including **frequencies, percentages, weighted means, and standard deviations, were used to describe the respondents' profiles**, stress-contributing factors, and mental health conditions. To determine differences in stress factors and mental health conditions across demographic variables, appropriate inferential statistics were employed based on the level of measurement and the data distribution. The relationship between stress-contributing factors and teachers' mental health conditions was assessed using Spearman's rho, which is appropriate for examining the strength and direction of associations among ordinal variables derived from Likert-scale responses. Statistical significance was evaluated at the **0.05 level**, and the resulting coefficients were interpreted using established guidelines for correlation analysis.

Ethical Considerations. The study was conducted in accordance with the basic ethical principles of respect for others, beneficence, and justice throughout the research process. All participants gave informed consent before data collection, and participation was voluntary. Participants were briefed on the study's aims, methods, potential benefits, and their right to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. To protect confidentiality, no personally identifying information was gathered, and all answers were handled anonymously. The data were securely stored and used strictly for academic and research purposes. To protect the names of the respondents and their respective institutions, the findings were published only in aggregate form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Learning Modalities Adapted by the Respondents. The majority of respondents (80.9%) used a hybrid learning modality, whereas comparatively few used asynchronous (11.8%), modular (4.1%), or simply synchronous training (3.3%). The prevalence of blended learning reflects the adaptive techniques that higher education institutions adopted to maintain instructional continuity, adhere to public health procedures, and ensure learner accessibility during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1. *Learning Modalities Adapted by College Teachers During the COVID-19 Pandemic (N = 246)*

Learning Modality	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Blended	199	80.9
Asynchronous	29	11.8
Modular	10	4.1
Synchronous	8	3.3
Total	246	100.0

This finding is consistent with UNESCO (2021), which reported that many higher education institutions adopted flexible learning approaches that combined online and limited face-to-face instruction to minimize educational disruption. Similarly, Hodges et al. (2020) emphasized that blended and flexible learning environments emerged as practical responses to emergency remote teaching, allowing institutions to sustain instruction while addressing technological and health-related constraints.

The extensive use of blended learning also meant instructors had to manage many instructional platforms and modalities concurrently, which may have increased the complexity of their professional roles and added to occupational stress—factors Affecting Stress in College Teachers. The findings showed that the respondents perceived the listed variables as moderate stressors during the COVID-19 pandemic, with an overall mean of 3.04 (SD = 0.77). Of the characteristics studied, fear of contagion was the most assessed stressor (M = 3.19), followed by working circumstances (M = 3.08) and health status (M = 3.01). Economic position and interpersonal interactions had lower scores, but still within the moderately contributing group.

Table 2. *Summary of Factors Contributing to Stress Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic (N = 246)*

Stress Factors	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Fear of Contagion	3.19	0.73	Moderately Contributing	1
Working Conditions	3.08	0.78	Moderately Contributing	2
Health Status	3.01	0.81	Moderately Contributing	3
Economic Status	2.99	0.79	Moderately Contributing	4
Relationship	2.94	0.76	Moderately Contributing	5
Overall	3.04	0.77	Moderately Contributing	

The leading concern was fear of contagion, mirroring the anxiety teachers had throughout the epidemic, especially about their own safety, the health of family members, and exposure in the workplace. The study confirms the World Health Organization (2022), which identified fear of infection as one

of the most prominent psychological stressors in public health emergencies. Similarly, Kim and Asbury (2020) found that teachers' stress levels increased dramatically due to concerns about health hazards, constantly shifting teaching needs, and ambiguity about how education will be delivered.

Working conditions also became a major issue, demonstrating that the shift to flexible learning required teachers to handle a greater workload, adapt to technology, and respond to evolving teaching needs. Bakker and Demerouti (2017) found that high job demands combined with low organizational resources were positively associated with occupational strain and negatively associated with psychological well-being. This indicates the need for institutional assistance during times of crisis.

Mental Health Conditions of College Teachers. The respondents demonstrated an overall **fair level of mental health condition** with a composite mean of **2.75 (SD = 0.73)**. Among the psychological dimensions assessed, **anxiety** recorded the highest mean ($M = 2.87$), followed by **helplessness** ($M = 2.78$), **disappointment** ($M = 2.77$), and **irritability** ($M = 2.58$).

Table 3. *Mental Health Conditions of College Teachers During the COVID-19 Pandemic (N = 246)*

Mental Health Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Anxiety	2.87	0.78	Fair	1
Helplessness	2.78	0.74	Fair	2
Disappointment	2.77	0.69	Fair	3
Irritability	2.58	0.73	Fair	4
Overall	2.75	0.73	Fair	

The relatively higher level of anxiety may be attributed to the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, concerns about health risks, and the rapid transition to alternative learning modalities. Teachers were expected to maintain instructional quality while adapting to unfamiliar technologies and balancing professional responsibilities with personal and family concerns. These circumstances likely heightened feelings of uncertainty and psychological strain.

The findings are consistent with those of Minihan et al. (2022), who reported worry and emotional tiredness as among the most frequently reported psychological feelings by teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, the World Health Organization (2022) stated that prolonged exposure to stressful events may affect the mental health of those who are otherwise able to perform well in their roles. However, the mean "fair" mental health status shows that the respondents had a modest level of psychological functioning and adaptability. This may indicate coping, institutional support, and professional resilience that enabled teachers to continue their teaching duties during the extraordinary educational disruption.

Relationship Between Learning Modalities and Teachers’ Mental Health Conditions. The Chi-square analysis revealed a **statistically significant association** between the learning modalities adapted and the mental health conditions of college teachers ($p = .009$). Since the obtained probability value is lower than the predetermined significance level of .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings suggest that teachers’ mental health conditions varied according to the instructional modality implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5. *Association Between Learning Modalities and Teachers’ Mental Health Conditions (N = 246)*

Variables	<i>p</i> Value	Decision	Interpretation
Learning Modalities and Mental Health Conditions	.009	Reject H_0	Significant Association

Note. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$.

The transition from conventional face-to-face instruction to modular, asynchronous, synchronous, and blended learning required teachers to rapidly acquire new technological competencies, redesign instructional materials, and manage multiple teaching platforms. These changes may have created varying psychological demands depending on the complexity and flexibility of the adopted learning modality. Teachers engaged in blended learning, for example, often balanced online instruction with limited face-to-face interaction, thereby increasing workload and requiring continuous adaptation to changing educational environments.

This finding is consistent with Kim and Asbury (2020), who reported that sudden changes in teaching delivery led to high levels of uncertainty and emotional distress among instructors in the early stages of the epidemic. Likewise, König et al. (2020) observed that the more the stress and psychological strain, the higher the technical and instructional demands on educators, particularly when institutional support and digital preparedness were lacking. According to the Job Demands-Resources Theory, different learning styles may be considered different degrees of job demands, which require instructors to expend more cognitive, emotional, and technical resources in their work. Moreover, the instructors may suffer more psychological pain and worse well-being when the organizational and human resources provided are not enough to match their expectations (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). On the other hand, the negative effects of alternative learning modalities might be reduced by sufficient institutional support, such as access to technology and professional development opportunities.

The findings suggest a statistically significant connection but should not be construed as evidence of a causal link between learning modalities and changes in mental health disorders. Instead, the data show that instructors who used different modes of instruction had varying levels of psychological well-

being during the epidemic. These differences are presumably the result of a confluence of educational requirements, organizational support, technological preparedness, and individual coping strategies. Overall, the results highlight the necessity of giving modality-specific professional assistance and mental health support to help instructors adjust to changing instructional contexts and protect their psychological health.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that college professors had moderate levels of occupational stress during the COVID-19 pandemic, with fear of contagion, working circumstances, and health-related concerns as the main stressors. However, the respondents appeared to be in relatively good mental health, suggesting that they have adaptive coping mechanisms and professional resilience to continue performing their teaching duties. The data also reveal that age, civil status, and years of teaching experience are associated with variations in selected stress variables and mental health dimensions, underscoring that teachers' personal and professional circumstances influence their experiences during educational interruptions. However, educational attainment did not substantially distinguish teachers' stress and mental health issues. No significant differences were found in learning modes across most stress-related aspects. However, there was a significant link between learning modalities and the mental health conditions of instructors, which indicated the differing psychological demands of different instructional techniques. In summary, the study shows that teachers' mental health is affected by the interplay among personal factors, the work environment, and organizational pressures. Therefore, protecting educators' psychological well-being through responsive institutional policies and comprehensive wellness initiatives is necessary to maintain instructional quality and organizational resilience during times of crisis and educational transformation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. **Higher education institutions** need to strengthen faculty wellness programs by integrating regular mental health assessments, stress management activities, counseling services, and psychosocial support initiatives that address the diverse needs of teachers.
2. **College administrators** need to develop supportive work environments by promoting manageable workloads, collaborative leadership, flexible work arrangements, and adequate technological and instructional resources, particularly during periods of educational disruption.

3. **Faculty development offices** need to provide continuous professional development programs focusing on digital competence, resilience building, adaptive coping strategies, and work-life balance to enhance teachers' capacity to respond effectively to changing instructional demands.
4. **Mental health interventions** need to be designed with consideration for teachers' age, civil status, and teaching experience, recognizing that these characteristics are associated with variations in stress experiences and psychological well-being.
5. **Future researchers** are encouraged to employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to explore the long-term effects of occupational stress on teacher well-being and instructional effectiveness. Additional organizational variables such as leadership support, organizational climate, job satisfaction, and resilience may likewise be examined to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' mental health in higher education settings.

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