

THE MEDIATING EFFECTS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS ON TEACHERS' PSYCHOSOCIAL SKILLS AND JOB PERFORMANCE IN MODULAR DISTANCE LEARNING (MDL)

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ABSTRACT

Article history:

Submission: 31 May 2023
Revised: 16 Jan 2024
Accepted: 24 Feb 2024
Publication: 7 Mar 2024

Keywords — occupational stress, psychosocial skills, job performance, modular distance learning, teachers

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the implementation of Modular Distance Learning (MDL) in Philippine schools, creating new instructional demands and challenges for teachers. This study examined the occupational stress, psychosocial skills, and job performance of public secondary school teachers in the MACBAC districts of Bohol during the implementation of MDL. Specifically, it determined the levels of these variables, explored their relationships, and examined differences based on selected demographic characteristics. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed involving 119 randomly selected public secondary school teachers. Data were gathered using adapted and validated instruments on occupational stress and psychosocial skills, while job performance was assessed through Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) ratings. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were utilized in the analysis. The findings revealed that teachers experienced a



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slightly stressful level of occupational stress, demonstrated high psychosocial skills, and attained a very satisfactory level of job performance. Educational attainment was significantly associated with psychosocial skills, while no significant relationships were found among occupational stress, psychosocial skills, and job performance. Likewise, no significant differences were observed in the study variables when grouped according to educational attainment. The findings suggest that teachers maintained professional effectiveness and adaptive functioning despite the challenges associated with modular instruction.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented disruptions to educational systems worldwide, compelling schools to adopt alternative learning modalities to ensure instructional continuity. In the Philippines, Modular Distance Learning (MDL) became one of the most widely implemented approaches, particularly in areas with limited internet connectivity. While MDL enabled the continuation of education during periods of restricted mobility, it also introduced new challenges for teachers who were required to redesign instructional practices, manage extensive module preparation and distribution, and maintain communication with learners and parents under unfamiliar conditions.

The transition to distance learning has drawn attention to teachers' occupational well-being. Occupational stress has been recognized as a significant concern among educators, particularly during periods of organizational and instructional change. Excessive work demands, role adjustments, and uncertainties associated with new teaching modalities may influence teachers' psychological functioning and overall effectiveness in the workplace. At the same time, psychosocial skills such as self-management, interpersonal competence, and adaptive performance are considered important personal resources that help educators cope with professional demands and sustain productive work behaviors (Bandura, 1997; Karasek, 1979).

Emerging evidence during the pandemic suggests that teachers experienced varying levels of occupational stress while simultaneously demonstrating resilience and adaptability in responding to educational disruptions. Although several studies have examined teacher stress and well-being during COVID-19, findings remain mixed regarding the extent to which occupational stress influences psychosocial functioning and job performance. Some studies reported adverse effects on educators' mental health and work engagement, whereas others noted sustained levels of professional commitment despite challenging circumstances (Pöysä et al., 2021; Shen & Slater, 2021).

Although previous studies have examined teacher stress, well-being, and performance during the COVID-19 pandemic, most have focused on psychological distress, burnout, or instructional challenges in isolation.

Limited empirical evidence has examined the simultaneous relationships among occupational stress, psychosocial skills, and job performance in modular learning environments, particularly among public secondary school teachers in the Philippine provinces. Consequently, it remains unclear whether psychosocial competencies serve as protective resources that sustain professional performance under occupational strain.

Guided by the Job Demand–Control Model (Karasek, 1979), Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997), and Resilience Theory (Masten, 2014), this study examined the levels of occupational stress, psychosocial skills, and job performance among public secondary school teachers in the MACBAC districts of Bohol during the implementation of Modular Distance Learning. Specifically, it explored whether occupational stress was associated with teachers' psychosocial skills and job performance and generated evidence that may inform initiatives to strengthen teacher well-being and organizational support systems during educational disruption.

Theoretical Background. This study is anchored in the Job Demand–Control Model, Self-Efficacy Theory, and Resilience Theory, which collectively provide a framework for understanding how teachers respond to occupational demands and maintain professional effectiveness during challenging educational conditions.

The **Job Demand–Control Model** developed by Karasek (1979) posits that occupational stress arises when job demands exceed an individual's capacity to manage them, particularly when opportunities for decision-making and control are limited. In educational settings, increased workload, role adjustments, and changing instructional expectations may create stress among teachers. During the implementation of Modular Distance Learning (MDL), teachers assumed additional responsibilities for module preparation, distribution, monitoring, and learner support, potentially increasing their occupational demands. The model suggests that teachers who possess greater autonomy and coping resources are better able to manage workplace pressures and minimize the adverse effects of stress.

Complementing this perspective is **Self-Efficacy Theory** proposed by Bandura (1997), which emphasizes individuals' beliefs in their capability to organize and execute actions required to achieve desired outcomes. Teachers with strong self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate confidence, adaptability, and persistence when confronted with professional challenges. Such beliefs influence how educators regulate their behavior, interact with others, and perform work-related tasks. In the context of this study, psychosocial skills—including performance, interpersonal, and self-management skills—are important manifestations of self-efficacy that may enable teachers to navigate the demands of modular instruction effectively.

The study is further informed by **Resilience Theory**, which views resilience as a dynamic process through which individuals adapt positively despite adversity (Masten, 2014). Rather than being a fixed personality trait, resilience

develops through interactions between personal strengths and environmental supports. During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers faced unprecedented disruptions to teaching and learning. Resilience Theory suggests that educators can maintain psychological well-being and professional functioning by utilizing adaptive coping strategies, social support systems, and personal competencies. This perspective helps explain why some teachers continue to demonstrate high psychosocial skills and satisfactory job performance despite experiencing occupational stress.

Taken together, these theories provide a comprehensive explanation of the study variables. The Job Demand–Control Model explains the emergence of occupational stress in response to workplace demands. Self-Efficacy Theory clarifies how psychosocial competencies influence teachers' ability to manage professional responsibilities. Resilience Theory, meanwhile, explains the adaptive processes that allow teachers to sustain effective job performance despite challenging circumstances. Collectively, these theoretical perspectives support examining the relationships among occupational stress, psychosocial skills, and job performance among public secondary school teachers implementing Modular Distance Learning.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

The shift to Modular Distance Learning (MDL) during the COVID-19 pandemic placed teachers in a work environment marked by unfamiliar instructional demands, altered communication patterns, and expanded responsibilities. In this context, occupational stress became an important concern because teachers had to manage module preparation, learner monitoring, parent coordination, documentation, and performance expectations while adjusting to public health restrictions. Occupational stress is generally understood as a response to work demands that may exceed one's perceived capacity, especially when role expectations are unclear or when available support is limited.

Karasek's (1979) Job Demand–Control Model provides a useful lens for understanding how increased work demands may affect teachers' well-being. The model suggests that stress is more likely to occur when job demands are high and workers have limited control over how tasks are performed. In the case of MDL, teachers were required to perform both routine and additional duties under conditions that were not fully comparable to those of traditional classroom teaching. These conditions may contribute to role overload, role ambiguity, and personal strain, particularly when teachers have limited resources or institutional support.

Studies conducted during the pandemic affirm that teachers and academic personnel experienced varying levels of occupational stress. Shen and Slater (2021) found that occupational stress among university academic staff was associated with mental health and emotional well-being during

the COVID-19 outbreak. Similarly, Pöysä, Pakarinen, and Lerkkanen (2021) reported that teachers' occupational well-being during the pandemic was shaped by exhaustion, recovery, and interactional patterns in teaching. These studies suggest that the pandemic affected teachers not only in terms of workload but also in relation to emotional recovery and professional engagement.

Alongside occupational stress, psychosocial skills are important in explaining how teachers manage challenging work conditions. Psychosocial skills refer to adaptive competencies that support effective performance, interpersonal functioning, and self-management. These skills are particularly relevant in distance learning because teachers must sustain communication with learners and parents, regulate their own responses to pressure, and maintain professional effectiveness despite constraints. Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory supports this view by emphasizing that individuals who believe in their capability to manage tasks are more likely to persist, adapt, and perform effectively in difficult situations.

Related studies indicate that psychosocial competencies may help educators navigate disruptions in teaching and learning. During the pandemic, teacher-family interaction became more central to instructional continuity, especially in distance learning contexts. Hodgman and colleagues (2021) observed that teachers' relationships with students and families shifted during COVID-19, with communication and support becoming critical elements of educational delivery. In the same vein, Wilichowski and Cobo (2020) emphasized that supporting teachers during and beyond the pandemic required attention not only to instructional delivery but also to the skills needed for adaptation and recovery.

Job performance, meanwhile, reflects the extent to which teachers fulfill expected duties and produce valued work outcomes. In the Philippine public school system, teacher performance is commonly assessed through the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF), which documents the extent to which teachers meet institutional performance standards. During MDL implementation, job performance became especially important because teachers were expected to maintain instructional quality despite the limitations of remote and modular learning.

The association between occupational stress and psychosocial skills and work performance is an important area of research. Some research indicates that stress can negatively affect performance and well-being. Other findings indicate that teachers can continue to function well when supported by personal and organizational resources. Resilience Theory, which views adaptation as a dynamic process through which individuals can continue functioning in the face of adversity (Masten, 2014), can explain this trend. In this view, teachers' psychosocial abilities might serve as adaptive resources for dealing with stress and maintaining performance.

This study addresses this issue by examining the occupational stress,

psychosocial skills, and work performance of public secondary school teachers in the MACBAC districts of Bohol during the implementation of MDL. International research has examined teacher stress and well-being during the epidemic, but local evidence is needed to understand how these factors operate in specific educational environments. The results of this study might inform the development of school-based support methods to improve teachers' occupational well-being, psychosocial functioning and professional performance during periods of educational disruption.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design to determine the levels of occupational stress, psychosocial skills, and job performance among public secondary school teachers and to examine the relationships among these variables during the implementation of Modular Distance Learning (MDL).

Participants and Setting. The study was conducted in selected public secondary schools within the MACBAC districts (Maribojoc, Antequera, Catigbian, Balilihan, and Cortes) in Bohol, Philippines, during the Academic Year 2021–2022. Using random sampling, 119 public secondary school teachers participated in the study. Only teachers with at least one year of service in the Department of Education were included.

Research Instrument. Data were obtained using a validated questionnaire on occupational stress and psychosocial skills. Occupational stress was measured in terms of occupational role, personal strain, and personal resources. Psychosocial skills were measured in terms of performance, interpersonal, and self-management abilities. Reliability testing revealed high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of .967 for occupational stress and .930 for psychosocial abilities. Job performance was measured using respondents' assessments on the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF).

Occupational stress was measured using a 50-item instrument adapted from the Occupational Stress Inventory-Revised (OSI-R). At the same time, psychosocial skills were assessed using a 30-item researcher-modified scale covering performance, interpersonal, and self-management competencies.

Data Collection and Ethical Considerations. Prior to data collection, ethical clearance and the necessary administrative approvals were secured. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Data were collected through printed questionnaires distributed in accordance with existing health and safety protocols. Confidentiality, anonymity, and data privacy were strictly observed throughout the study.

Data Analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data. Normality tests were conducted to determine the appropriate inferential analyses. Chi-

square tests were used to examine associations between profile variables and occupational stress and psychosocial skills. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was employed to determine the relationships among occupational stress, psychosocial skills, and job performance. One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the Kruskal–Wallis test were used to determine differences across educational attainment groups. All analyses were performed at a 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents. The study involved 119 public secondary school teachers from the MACBAC districts of Bohol. Most respondents were aged 30–39 years (36.97%), followed by those aged 40–49 years (26.89%). The majority were female (89.08%), reflecting the predominance of women in the teaching profession.

In terms of educational attainment, most respondents have completed their master's degree units (65.55%), indicating that they are currently enrolled in graduate studies and professional development. In terms of teaching experience, most respondents had 6–10 years (35.29%), followed by 1–5 years (27.73%) and 11–20 years (23.53%). In general, the replies showed a teaching force that was quite experienced and intellectually advanced.

Occupational Stress, Psychosocial Skills, and Job Performance. As shown in Table 2, the respondents reported a generally low level of occupational stress ($M = 2.48$), indicating that the demands associated with Modular Distance Learning (MDL) were perceived as only slightly stressful. Among the occupational stress dimensions, personal strain had the highest mean ($M = 2.52$), suggesting that psychological and physical demands were more pronounced than concerns about occupational roles and available resources. Despite these challenges, the overall level of stress remained manageable.

Table 2. *Summary of Occupational Stress, Psychosocial Skills, and Job Performance Among Public Secondary School Teachers (N = 119)*

Variable	Dimension	M	Interpretation
Occupational Stress	Occupational Role	2.44	Slightly Stressful
	Personal Strain	2.52	Moderately Stressful
	Personal Resources	2.47	Slightly Stressful
	Overall	2.48	Slightly Stressful
Psychosocial Skills	Performance Skills	3.16	Average Psychosocial Skills
	Interpersonal Skills	3.31	High Psychosocial Skills
	Self-Management Skills	3.33	High Psychosocial Skills
	Overall	3.27	High Psychosocial Skills
Job Performance	IPCRF Rating	4.15	Very Satisfactory

Note. M = Mean.

However, the high levels of psychosocial skills among the responders might be due to adaptive techniques they acquired through their extensive exposure to modular education. The prevalence of self-management skills suggests that instructors relied heavily on self-regulation and emotional control to meet growing instructional expectations and workplace uncertainty. Such abilities may have helped them to maintain instructional effectiveness despite the restrictions of the epidemic. Research has shown the need for adaptive and socio-emotional abilities to help instructors manage educational disruptions (Hodgman et al., 2021; Wilichowski & Cobo, 2020). Moreover, respondents’ job performance was relatively excellent (M = 4.15), indicating that the professional requirements were met despite hindrances from MDL. The results suggest teachers were committed to instructional delivery and student support during a time of great educational change.

Relationship Between Respondents’ Profile and Study Variables. Table 3 presents the associations between selected demographic characteristics and the study variables. The results revealed that age, sex, highest educational attainment, and length of service were not significantly associated with occupational stress ($p > .05$). This finding suggests that teachers experienced comparable levels of occupational stress regardless of their demographic and professional characteristics.

Table 3. *Relationship Between Respondents' Profile, Occupational Stress, and Psychosocial Skills (N = 119)*

Variable	Occupational Stress p-value	Psychosocial Skills p-value
Age	.533	.412
Sex	.653	.274
Highest Educational Attainment	.902	.003*
Length of Service	.599	.388

Note. *p < .05.

Similarly, age, sex, and length of service were not significantly related to psychosocial skills. However, the highest level of educational attainment was significantly associated with psychosocial skills ($p = .003$). This finding suggests that teachers with higher levels of academic preparation may possess stronger psychosocial competencies, possibly due to greater exposure to professional learning opportunities and advanced academic experiences. The result is consistent with previous evidence highlighting education's contribution to psychosocial functioning and adaptive capacity (Mitchell et al., 2018).

Relationships and Differences Among the Study Variables. As presented in Table 4, occupational stress was not significantly associated with psychosocial skills ($r = .158$, $p = .086$) or job performance ($r = .002$, $p = .986$). Likewise, psychosocial skills were not significantly related to job performance ($r = -.073$, $p = .429$). These findings indicate that variations in occupational stress and psychosocial functioning did not correspond to measurable differences in teachers' professional performance during the implementation of MDL.

One explanation for the lack of meaningful associations may be the comparatively low level of work stress reported by respondents. Although instructors had obstacles with the modular education, these demands may not have been intense enough to affect psychosocial functioning or work performance. Moreover, the low variety in IPCRF ratings, with most respondents rated as very good, may have limited the ability to detect significant statistical relationships among the variables. Additional analyses did not find significant differences in occupational stress, psychosocial skills, or work performance when respondents were stratified by their greatest level of education. The data indicate that teachers' well-being and professional efficiency did not vary much with their academic credentials.

Taken together, the results imply that the respondents were able to maintain satisfactory performance despite experiencing varying levels of occupational stress. The absence of significant relationships among the major variables may reflect the adaptive capacities and resilience demonstrated by teachers in responding to the demands of modular instruction during the pandemic (Masten, 2014; Shen & Slater, 2021).

Table 4. *Correlations and Differences Among Occupational Stress, Psychosocial Skills, and Job Performance (N = 119)*

Analysis	Statistic	p-value	Interpretation
Occupational Stress and Psychosocial Skills	$r = .158$	.086	Not Significant
Occupational Stress and Job Performance	$r = .002$	.986	Not Significant
Psychosocial Skills and Job Performance	$r = -.073$	.429	Not Significant
Occupational Stress by Educational Attainment	$F = 1.277$	.283	Not Significant
Psychosocial Skills by Educational Attainment	$F = 0.509$	.729	Not Significant
Job Performance by Educational Attainment	$\chi^2 = 4.139$	.388	Not Significant

Limitations of the Study. Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study relied on self-reported measures of occupational stress and psychosocial skills, which may be subject to response bias. Second, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Third, the study was conducted within selected public secondary schools in one congressional district of Bohol, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the occupational stress, psychosocial skills, and job performance of public secondary school teachers implementing Modular Distance Learning (MDL) in the MACBAC districts of Bohol during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings revealed that teachers generally experienced low levels of occupational stress, particularly regarding occupational role and personal resources, although moderate levels of personal strain were observed. Despite the challenges associated with modular instruction, the respondents demonstrated high psychosocial skills, particularly in self-management and interpersonal competencies, and maintained a very satisfactory level of job performance.

The study further found that demographic characteristics were generally unrelated to occupational stress and psychosocial skills, except for educational attainment, which was significantly associated with psychosocial skills. Moreover, occupational stress, psychosocial skills, and job performance were not significantly correlated. Likewise, no significant differences were observed in these variables when respondents were grouped according to educational attainment.

The results showed that the teachers were able to cope well with the difficulties of modular distance learning. High psychosocial competencies and continuous performance suggest a high level of professional resilience and dedication to the uncertainties and challenges posed by the epidemic. This study contributes to the expanding literature on teachers' well-being by demonstrating teachers' ability to maintain psychosocial functioning and professional competence amid educational upheaval.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. **School administrators** may strengthen teacher well-being programs by institutionalizing psychosocial support initiatives, stress management activities, and professional wellness interventions that promote healthy work environments and prevent occupational strain.
2. **Teachers** may continue to develop self-management, emotional regulation, and interpersonal competencies through professional development activities, peer support networks, and reflective practice to sustain resilience and professional effectiveness.
3. **The Department of Education and school leaders** may provide continuous capacity-building programs that enhance teachers' adaptive skills, particularly in responding to emerging instructional challenges and alternative learning modalities.
4. **Graduate education institutions and teacher training providers** may integrate psychosocial well-being, resilience-building strategies, and occupational health concepts into professional development and advanced education programs for educators.
5. **Future researchers** may examine other factors that potentially influence teachers' job performance, such as organizational support, leadership practices, work engagement, self-efficacy, and workplace climate. Qualitative or mixed-methods approaches may likewise be undertaken to gain deeper insights into teachers' experiences and coping mechanisms during periods of educational disruption.

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