

MENTAL HEALTH OF TEACHERS AMIDST OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN THE NEW NORMAL OF EDUCATION: TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

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Abstract

Apart from the daily pressures of work, studies have shown that teachers are more likely to suffer from mental health problems such as anxiety and depression than people in other professions. Explanatory-sequential mixed method was used to find out the ways of teachers in overcoming challenges in the new normal of education in relation to their demographic profile, level of mental health and challenges encountered. Specifically, this study was concerned whether there is a significant difference between the level of mental health in terms of psychological distress, psychological wellbeing, and demographic profile of teachers. Quantitative analysis revealed that the level of mental health in terms of psychological distress has significant differences on age of the respondents. Loss of behavioral or emotion control differed significantly among the subject handled of the respondents. Also, the level of mental health in terms of psychological wellbeing with its variables such as general positive affect and emotional ties have significant differences on age of the respondents. Moreover, the challenges encountered by the senior high school teachers in the New Normal of Education in terms of classroom management, training, resources, technical skills, and communication is evidently connected to student, training, availability, and teacher concerns. On the other hand, the ways of senior high school teachers in overcoming the challenges in the New Normal of Education is evidently attached to internal and external concerns. External concern represented as social support and internal concern refers to self-support. Based on the integration of quantitative and qualitative results for mental health subscales and overcoming the challenges in the new normal, a Psychosocial Support Program was proposed to adhere the mental health standards in the new normal set up and even beyond.

Keywords: Mental Health, Teacher, Education, Psychological.

Introduction

Republic Act 11036 (2017), also known as the Mental Health Act, defined Mental Health as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes one's own abilities and potentials, copes adequately with the normal stresses of life, displays resilience in the face of extreme life events, works productively and fruitfully and is able to make a positive contribution to the community.

Each day, teachers interact with a great variety of students, each with their own unique personality and challenges. Apart from the daily pressures of work, it can often lead to stress and anxiety. According to Jimenez (2021) in his study entitled "Impact of Mental Health and Stress Level of Teachers to Learning Resource Development", teachers are more likely to suffer from mental health problems such as anxiety and depression than people in other professions. Furthermore, the study found that in terms of mental health, the teachers experience less than once a week of sleeping problems. For social well-being, teachers experience them almost every day. For the things that bother them, the teachers were not bothered at all. The teachers also have positive mental health, and for the aspect of bouncing back, they responded neutrally. In terms of stress levels, the teachers revealed that they sometimes experience such a thing.

Lockdown and social distancing measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic have led to closures of schools, training institutes and higher education facilities in most countries. There is a paradigm shift in the way educators deliver quality education—through various online platforms. The online learning, distance and continuing education have become a panacea for this unprecedented global pandemic, despite the challenges posed to both educators and the learners. Transitioning from traditional face-to-face learning to online learning can be an entirely different experience for the learners and the educators, which they must adapt to with little or no other alternatives available. The education system and the educators have adopted "Education in Emergency" through various online platforms and are compelled to adopt a system that they are not prepared for. (Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021)

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E-learning tools have played a crucial role during this pandemic, helping schools and universities facilitate student learning during the closure of universities and schools (Subedi et al., 2020). While adapting to the new changes, staff and student readiness needs to be gauged and supported accordingly. The learners with a fixed mindset find it difficult to adapt and adjust, whereas the learners with a growth mindset quickly adapt to a new learning environment. There is no one-size-fits-all pedagogy for online learning. There are a variety of subjects with varying needs. Different subjects and age groups require different approaches to online learning (Doucet et al., 2020). Online learning also allows physically challenged students with more freedom to participate in learning in the virtual environment, requiring limited movement. (Basilaia and Kvavadze, 2020)

The use of online platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, virtual learning environment and social media and various group forums like Telegram, Messenger, WhatsApp and WeChat are explored and tried for teaching and learning for the first time ever to continue education. This can be explored further even after face-to-face teaching resumes, and these platforms can provide additional resources and coaching to the learners. (Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021). In the light of COVID-19 pandemic which redefined the educational landscape in its modalities, teachers face many challenges, personally and professionally. These challenges may result in depression, distress and burnout which could affect their mental well-being. (Lugue and Galicia, 2021)

Teachers are obliged to develop creative initiatives that assist to overcome the limitations of virtual teaching. Teachers are actively collaborating with one another at a local level to improve online teaching methods. There are incomparable opportunities for cooperation, creative solutions and willingness to learn from others and try new tools as educators, parents and students share similar experiences. Many educational organizations are offering their tools and solutions for free to help and support teaching and learning in a more interactive and engaging environment. Online learning has provided the opportunity to teach and learn in innovative ways unlike the teaching and learning experiences in the normal classroom setting. (Doucet et al., 2020)

After the historic disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, most schools are back open worldwide but education is still in recovery assessing the damage done and lessons learned. The pandemic affected more than 1.5 billion students and youth with the most vulnerable learners were hit hardest. Some gains already made towards the goals of the 2030 Education Agenda were lost. From the outset

UNESCO's Education Sector worked with ministries of education, public and private partners and civil society to ensure continued learning for all children and youth. The Sector's work is now focused on prioritizing education as a public good for everyone in order to avoid a generational catastrophe and drive sustainable recovery. Key in its initiatives was the establishment of the Global Education Coalition, a new model for international cooperation which develops innovative responses to help countries cope with the aftereffects of the crisis. It counts more than 175 members working around three central themes: gender, connectivity and teachers. (UNESCO, 2022)

In the study of Herrera and Caballes (2022), distance matters in terms of communication, and gadgets and technology do not simply solve that problem in education. While the help of technology is acknowledged in the current learning setup, it cannot be denied that the problem in communication is still apparent. Also, teachers encountered several challenges during the sustained global health crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic brought changes in human life. Physical distancing makes everyone safe but affects the social and even emotional aspects of every individual. In the two years of the pandemic, people learned to adjust to survive. The education sector introduced different approaches such as blended learning, hybrid learning and hyflex learning to continue the journey of every youth globally. However, in this new normal approach, students complain about their mental health issues. Teachers have been able to encounter challenges at the same time, opportunities in the new normal situation.

The mental health and stress level of teachers are two important factors that allow them to become holistic classroom managers and leaders. Teachers are the front lines of the Department of Education (DepEd) in delivering its curriculum, services, and skills mastery to the learners. The mental health wellness of teachers provides learner's a positive learning and development experience through school-based mental health services. (Jimenez, 2021)

Ways to overcome challenges arise to continue their delivery of quality education.

Thus, this study aims to find out the ways teachers in overcoming challenges amidst in the new of education in relation to their demographic profile, level of mental health and challenges encountered

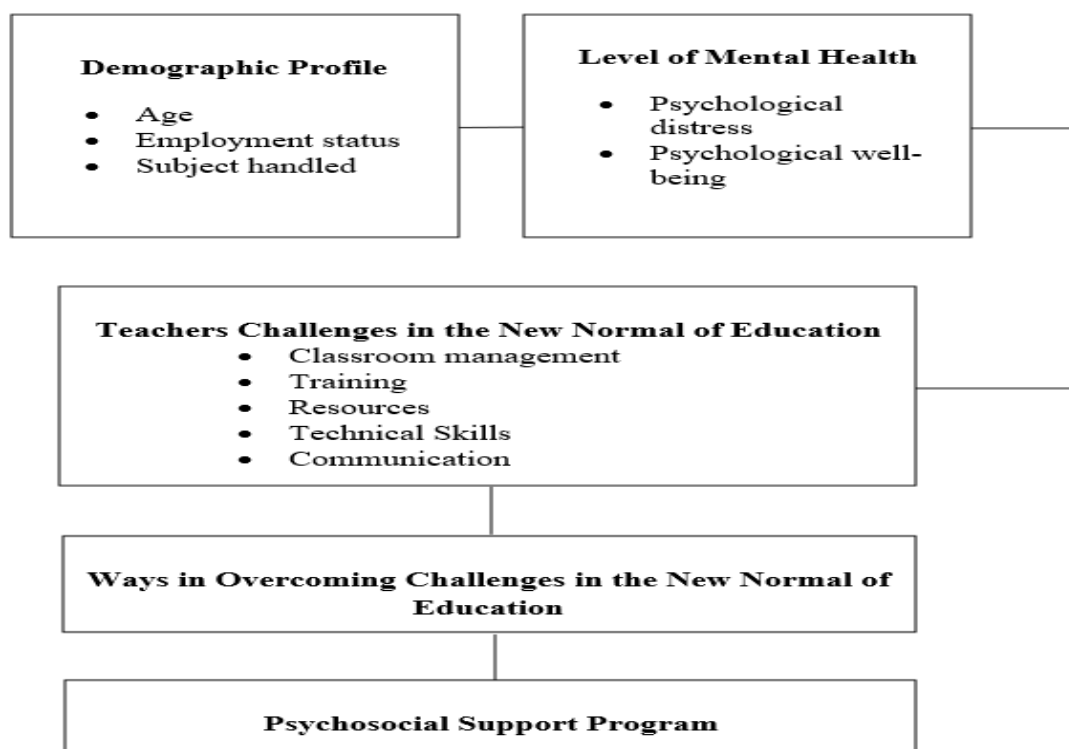
Theoretical Framework

The current study anchored on the Transactional model of Stress and Coping (TSC) proposed by Lazarus and Folkman. This theory contended that a person's capacity to cope and adjust to challenges

and problems is a consequence of transactions (or interactions) that occur between a person and their environment. The TSC proposes that two prototypical states, challenge and threat, arise from cognitive judgments of the meaning of a situation and one's ability to respond to the situation. In the TSC, primary appraisal refers to the judgment of a situation as being benign or stressful. Benign situations are judged as requiring no instrumental action on the part of the individual to facilitate a positive outcome, whereas stressful situations are judged to require specific action(s). Stressful situations themselves fall into two categories, they can be challenging or threatening. Challenging situations are those perceived to offer the potential for growth, mastery, and gain (e.g., performing well

at exams). Threatening situations are those perceived to potentially result in harm or loss (e.g., performing poorly at exams). The perception of challenge or threat is determined in a secondary appraisal of one's ability to cope with, and respond to, the stressful situation. Challenge results from the judgment that one has the necessary resources to cope (e.g., I know this exam is important but I have belief in my ability), and threat from the judgment that one does not (e.g., I know this exam is important but I do not think I have the skills to pass it). (Putwain, 2021).

Conceptual Framework



Statement of the Problem

The research aimed to find out the ways of teachers in overcoming challenges in the new normal of education in relation to their demographic profile, level of mental health and challenges encountered. Specifically, this investigation is sought to answer the following questions:

For the quantitative questions

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age;
 - 1.2 Employment status; and
 - 1.3 Subject handled?
2. What is the level of mental health of teachers amidst overcoming challenges in the new normal of education in terms of:
 - 2.1 Psychological distress; and

2.2 Psychological well-being?

3. Is there a significant difference in the level of mental health in terms of psychological distress when grouped according to the demographic profile of teachers?
4. Is there a significant difference in the level of mental health in terms of psychological well-being when grouped according to the demographic profile of teachers?

For the qualitative questions

5. How do teachers describe their challenges in the new normal of education in terms of:
 - 5.1 Classroom management;
 - 5.2 Training;
 - 5.3 Resources;
 - 5.4 Technical Skills; and
 - 5.5 Communication?

6. How do teachers overcome the challenges in the new normal of education?
7. Based on the findings, what psychosocial support program may be developed?

Scope and Delimitations

The study aimed to find out the ways of teachers in overcoming challenges in the new normal of education in relation to their demographic profile, level of mental health and challenges encountered.

The demographic profile of the teachers was assessed in terms of age, employment status and subjects handled, while the level of mental health was assessed in terms of psychosocial distress and psychosocial well-being. Psychological Distress indicates negative states of mental health, and Psychological Well-being indicates positive states. Psychological Distress is composed of the following subscales: anxiety, depression, and loss of behavioural/ emotional control. On the other hand, Psychological Well-being is composed of the following subscales: general positive affect, emotional ties and life satisfaction.

An in-depth analysis of the respondents' description of challenges in terms of Classroom management, Training, Resources, Technical Skills, and Communication Skills and how they overcame the challenges were collected from the narrative responses about their overall experience in the new normal of education.

The respondents of the study are senior high school teachers from selected private schools, both male and female, in Manila and Bulacan.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized the mixed method, specifically the explanatory-sequential approach. This is used when the researcher is interested in following up the quantitative results with qualitative data. Thus, the qualitative data is used in the subsequent interpretation and clarification of the results from the quantitative data analysis (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). They defined the exploratory sequential technique as a progressive strategy that is used anytime that quantitative (QUAN) results are augmented by qualitative (QUAL) data. As a result, quantitative data analyses and explains the QUAL results in succession. The exploratory sequential technique is distinct from the explanatory sequential technique because it explores a concept before validating it, allowing for greater versatility in discovering novel ideas offered by the QUAL approach.

To relate it in the running study, it quantitatively investigated the level of mental health status and qualitatively investigated the challenges of teachers

and their ways in overcoming challenges in the new normal of education.

In the quantitative data collection phase of the study, the researcher collected survey data from teachers by way of purposive sampling, a form of non-probability sampling technique to select a number of respondents based on the researcher's judgment.

After the quantitative part, the researcher carried on with the qualitative analysis. Specifically, the Reflexive Thematic Analysis was employed. This method was chosen due to its accessibility and conceptual flexibility in interpreting qualitative data. It facilitated the identification of patterns or themes within the data set, making it easier to analyze them.

Conversely, two open-ended questions were asked from the respondents about their challenges encountered in terms of classroom management, training, resources, technical skills and communication and their ways of overcoming the challenges in the new normal of education. The researcher prepared it in a separate Google form. A consent form was made for the respondents. In this manner, their responses were recorded, processed, and analyzed through a thematic approach.

Participants/Respondents of the Study

The respondent of the study involves a total of 271 senior high school teachers from ten (10) selected private schools in both male and female in Manila and Bulacan. Using the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator, the allowed sample size of 160 is calculated.

Instrument/s of the Study

The researcher utilized a standardized instrument as a tool in collecting the data needed in the study for the level of mental health. The questionnaire was developed as part of National Health Insurance Study by Clarice Veit and John Ware, which helps assess general psychological distress and well-being. The MHI can be scored as a:

- Global mental health index with higher scores indicating less psychological distress and greater psychological well-being.
- Two global scales indicating either the level of psychological well-being (higher scores indicating greater well-being) or psychological distress (higher scores indicating greater distress).
- Six subscale scores (General Positive Affect, Life Satisfaction, Emotional Ties, Depression, Anxiety, and Loss of Behavioral/Emotional Control) (higher scores indicating more of the construct described by the subscale name)

All the MHI items are scored on a six-point scale (1-6) except for items 9 and 28, which are scored on a

five-point scale (1-5). The questionnaire tested the reliability and validity using Cronbach alpha with a result of .94 for the full-length version (Pandya, 2018) and Cronbach Alpha of .82 for the abbreviated version (Antazo, 2020). Furthermore, it is also well-known and has been field-tested in extensive populations. Scoring will be based on the mean score obtained from each subscale. Therefore, a higher score on a scale indicates the presence of unfavourable symptoms, while a lower score indicates the presence of favourable symptoms experienced by the respondents.

For the qualitative questions, the researcher formulated a self-made open-ended question for the qualitative part of the research. Four (4) guidance and counselling specialists were consulted to validate the self-made open-ended questions. The qualitative questions were used to collect respondents' individual perspectives and attitudes towards the challenges encountered and ways of overcoming the challenges in the new normal of education.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collected was tabulated and processed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is a set of software programs that analyze scientific data related to social science. This data can be used for market research, surveys, data mining, etc. (Noels, 2018).

For the quantitative part, data were gathered, analyzed, and interpreted by giving the participants a test that determined their level of mental health. Analysis of Variance was used to determine the significant difference in the assessment of level of mental health in terms of Psychosocial distress when grouped according to the demographic profile and same with level of mental health in terms of Psychosocial well-being when grouped to the demographic profile as well as to test the hypotheses of this research.

For the qualitative part, data were gathered from the participants' answers to the open-ended questions: How teachers describe their challenges in the new normal of education in terms of classroom management, training, resources, technical skills and communication. How teachers overcome the challenges in the new normal of education? Substantial responses were used for thematic analysis and explored with the quantitative results.

Ethical Considerations

The La Consolacion University Philippines Research Ethics Committee examined the research paper. Before completing the research questions, each participant gave their informed consent. Participants were made aware of the research goals, any potential relevance of the study, and a

declaration that there were no conflicts of interest within the study before the questionnaires were given out. As a result, the following ethical guidelines were implemented for this research, including:

1. Protecting the rights of the research participants.
2. Prior to the study, the researcher will obtain consent from the respondents it stated that the respondent's participation is voluntary and they could withdraw from the study anytime.
3. The anonymity of the respondents, as well as their privacy, will be ensured.
4. The research and the respondent's elicited data will remain confidential throughout the study.
5. Acknowledgement and citation of different authors' papers used in any part of this study.
6. During the entire research, the researcher will ensure the confidentiality and integrity of personal data and will be put in place to safeguard the collected information from loss, misuse, unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration, or destruction as based on the RA 10173 otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Results and Discussion

The summative outcome of the study is presented to determine the ways of teachers in overcoming challenges in the new normal of education in relation to their demographic profile, level of mental health and challenges encountered from the ten (10) selected institutions offering senior high school in Manila and Bulacan. Hence, the findings of the study were summarized as follows:

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The result of the study illustrates that most of the respondents, 43.13% (n = 69), are within the age group 21-25 years old. The result shows that in terms of employment status, 43.13% (n=69) in probationary. Finally, the subject handled of the respondents are mostly in the area of languages (26.88%).

Level of Mental Health

On the assessment of level of mental health of the respondents, results showed that senior high school teachers experienced few occurrences of unfavorable psychological distress and psychological well-being.

The Difference in the Level of Mental Health in terms of Psychological Distress when Grouped According to the Demographic Profile of Teachers

There is a significant difference between the three variables in the mental health inventory in terms of Psychological Distress, particularly anxiety, depression and loss of behavioral or emotional control on age of the respondents. Findings also revealed that the subject handled of the respondents

differed significantly with loss of behavioral or emotion control.

The Difference in the Level of Mental Health in terms of Psychological Well-being when Grouped According to the Demographic Profile of Teachers

There is a significant difference between the two variables in the mental health inventory in terms of Psychological Well-being such as general positive affect and emotional ties on age of the respondents.

Challenges in the New Normal of Education

Based on answers of the respondents, the following themes were created on:

1. Challenges in the new normal of education in terms of Classroom management
 - Student concern (student interaction, student discipline, student engagement, student interest, student development, student motivation and student diversity)
 - Resources concern (technology and equipment/furniture)
 - Adjustment concern (modality, activity and protocol)
2. Challenges in the new normal of education in terms of Training
 - Training concern (availability, modality, number of trainings attended, time of conduct, types of trainings)
 - Teacher concern (experience, age, attention and time/focus)
 - Student concern (interest/attention)
 - Resources concern (technology, budget)
3. Challenges in the new normal of education in terms of Resources
 - Availability concern (lack and limited)
 - Technology concern (availability of stable internet connection, availability of equipment/tools/gadget/devices, communication)
 - Teacher concern (creativity, familiarization, flexibility, specialization, wages)
 - Authenticity concern (communication, reliability)
 - Other concern (adjustments, training, distribution, enrollment, time)
4. Challenges in the new normal of education in terms of Technical Skills
 - Teacher concern (adjustment, application, awareness)
 - Training concern (availability)
 - Student concern (adjustment, knowledge)
 - Technology concern (availability, application)
5. Challenges in the new normal of education in terms of Communication Skills
 - Student concern (dependency on social media, financial, knowledge, language, language anxiety, language development,

confidence level, engagement, interest, knowledge)

- Adjustment concern (modality, protocol, language)
- Teacher concern (adjustments, application, knowledge, limitations of communication, preparation, social interaction)
- Manner of delivery concern (sensitivity)

Ways of Overcoming the Challenges in the New Normal of Education

Based on answers of the respondents, the following themes were created on:

- a. External concern (support from administration /colleagues/students/experts, support from family/friends)
- b. Internal concern (openness to learn, able to adapt, acceptance, having positive/proactive mind, self-determination, being prayerful/having faith with God, goal setting, self-care, being flexible, awareness, being systematic/organized/motivated, initiative, proper management, being innovative and being resilient)

Psychosocial Support Program Proposed Based on Findings

Based on the research findings, the researcher has crafted a program for teachers to sustain positivity and promote holistic psychosocial support.

Conclusion

In the light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Majority of the respondents are from the age bracket of 21-25 years old, probationary in status and handled language subjects.
2. Majority of the respondents have been experiencing psychological distress that affects the psychological well-being.
3. The level of mental health in terms of psychological distress have significant differences on age of the respondents. Loss of behavioral or emotion control differed significantly among the subject handled of the respondents.
4. The level of mental health in terms of psychological well-being with its variables such as general positive affect and emotional ties have significant differences on age of the respondents.
5. The challenges encountered by the senior high school teachers in the New Normal of Education in terms of classroom management, training, resources, technical skills and communication is evidently connected to student, training, availability, and teacher concerns.
6. The ways of senior high school teachers in overcoming the challenges in the New Normal

of Education is evidently attached to internal and external concerns. External concern represented as social support and internal concern refers to self-support.

Recommendations

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

1. Schools may sustain the implementation of a holistic psychosocial support to attend to the needs on the aspects of intellectual, physical, social and spiritual every academic year.
2. Schools may consider the conduct of impact study after the implementation of psychosocial support program for teachers to address the concerns that might arise during the conduct.
3. Schools may establish or sustain a clear policy on mental health to provide services centered on preventive approaches.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between the authors in this manuscript.

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