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Research Article

Work-related Stress and Subjective Well-being as Experienced by Public Elementary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the relationship between work-related stress and subjective well-being as experienced by public elementary school teachers. To achieve the purpose of the study, a descriptive-correlational research design was used and 104 teachers were asked to respond to the NUT Teacher Well-Being "Ready Reckoner" and Satisfaction with Life Scale. Finding after statistical analyses revealed that teacher-respondents of the study had low levels of work-related stress/ greater levels of well-being and were mostly satisfied with their lives. It was further revealed that SWB is correlated with low levels of work-related stress as indicated in the significant moderately positive correlation between the two variables. Recommendations of the study highlighted the need for teacher-support programs that may help buffer teachers against work-related stress.

Keywords: correlation; subjective well-being; public school teachers; work-related stress..

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is indeed a noble profession. No corporate bigwigs, hotshots and other high paid professionals can make sacrifices comparable to what a teacher does [13]. Teaching may also be considered a vocation that only handful will bravely face [21]. Aside from the meager salary, teaching as job is also undoubtedly time-consuming and challenging. And as the demands on education and schools increases, so does the incidence of work-related stress among teachers. Öztürk [16] believes that working conditions is directly influential on the experience of work-related stress among teachers and such stresses can impact teachers' health and even teachers' effectiveness in the classroom.

Unfortunately, teachers' stress particularly that of work-related stress has not been considered as part of institutional weakness. Instead, teachers are

expected to be resilient, self-sufficient, and flexible enough to handle the demands and challenges of the profession. That is why dealing with stress has been placed at the feet of the individual teacher. For these reasons, many teachers often experience dissatisfaction that later on lead to the choosing of another career.

It is interesting to note though that stress can be subjective and is dependent on the individual. Stress can be categorized into two: eustress (positive stress) or distress (negative stress) which are considered challenge or overload, respectively. Eustress is essential to life; however, distress can lead to diseases. What might be eustress to one may be a distress to another person [1]. Similarly, Popoola and Ilugbo [18] reiterated that stress that is excessive for one person can be perfectly tolerable for another. Also, Hussain, [11] assumed that stress can be both good and bad depending upon person's own reaction

and personal capacity in dealing with it. Hence, the levels of stress experienced by the teachers particularly in the workplace can vary from one teacher to another in similar work environments.

Since stress appears to be subjective in nature, one possible way to examine whether teachers are thriving in the face of stresses and adversities is by assessing its relationship on the cognitive domain of their life satisfaction or subjective well-being. It is vital that teachers are able to recognize work-related factors that cause stress, how much stress they are experiencing, and evaluate their life satisfaction in order to deal with it in a positive manner which could then lead to healthier and more fulfilling careers.

Work-related Stress:

Stress has been defined by Kyriacou as the experience by teachers of unpleasant negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression that can be attributed to the work of being a teacher. It can be said that the teaching profession is one of the most stressful professions. Aside from the changing curricula and added managerial roles given to teachers, every teacher has to cope excessive working hours and workloads, piles of paper works, increasing class sizes, pressures due to inspections and observations of school heads, interpersonal relationship issue particularly conflicts and lack of support from colleagues and superiors, lack of material resources to improve work efficiency and quality standards, rapid technological advances in all aspects of teacher's work, parents misdemeanor, and pupils challenging, off-task and disruptive behaviors [3].

Subjective well-being:

Subjective well-being (SWB) is always dependent on people's self-reflections and self-reporting. SWB is a reflection of the extent to which people think and feel that their lives are going well. More generally, it can be defined in terms of affective and cognitive evaluations of life satisfaction [5]. Specifically, Diener, Lucas and Oishi defined it as people's emotional and cognitive or judgmental evaluations of their lives. It includes what lay people call happiness, peace, fulfillment, and life satisfaction. The cognitive aspect of SWB is the judgmental reflection of individuals satisfaction with life, or other areas of importance which may include career, marriage, health and the like. Affective components of SWB can be described in terms of general feelings, moods and even emotions in everyday life.

2. Objectives:

This study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To determine the level of stress particularly work-related stress and subjective well-being of public elementary school teachers; and
2. To determine whether significant correlation exist between work-related stress and subjective well-being.

3. Hypothesis:

1. There is no significant correlation between work-related stress and the subjective well-being.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

4.1 Respondents:

The respondents of the study were teachers from the public elementary schools, East District in the DepEd Division of Angeles City, Philippines. A total of 104 teachers willingly served as respondents of the study. Data gathering was done during the second quarter of the Academic Year 2014-2015. The youngest among the respondents was 21 years old while the oldest was 62 years old. The mean age of the respondents was of 33.58 years old. In terms of years in teaching, one to 27 years was observed. On average the teachers have been in the service for 7.47 years. Males were underrepresented in the study. There were only 11 male and 93 were female respondents. Of the 104 respondents, 52 were married, 47 were single, 2 were separated and 3 were single parents.

4.2 Instruments:

Two research instruments were used to collect the necessary data for the study. To ascertain the extent of work-related stress among the respondents, the Teacher Stress Survey- National Union of Teachers (NUT) Teacher Well-Being "Ready Reckoner" (2012) was administered. The NUT Well-being "Ready Reckoner" is a 26-item survey and uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from not at all (1) to very much so (5). High scores are suggestive of greater levels of well-being and lower levels of stress while lower totals tend to indicate lower levels of well-being and elevated degrees of stress. On the other hand, to determine the level of subjective well-being of the respondents, Satisfaction with Life Scale [5] was administered. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) measures the global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction. Respondents indicate how much they agree or disagree of the items in the instrument using a 7-point scale that ranges from (7) strongly agree to (1) strongly disagree. High scores indicate higher levels of subjective well-being (SWB) while low scores suggest lower levels of subjective well-being.

4.3 Data Analysis:

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 17.0) was utilized to efficiently and accurately analyze the gathered data. Likert scales, frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values for all the instruments utilized in the study were used to describe demographic and descriptive variables. The significant correlations between stress and subjective well-being were measured using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). The strengths of relationships between variables were interpreted using the range of values of

Pearson's r given by Mercado-del Rosario [14].

5. Results:
5.1 Findings:

Presented in Table 1 are the descriptive statistics of the responses in the Teacher Stress Survey (National Union of Teachers (NUT) Teacher Well-Being "Ready Reckoner." Table 2 presents the

overall descriptive ratings of the stress items. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the responses on Satisfaction with Life Scale items, and the overall descriptive rating for SWLS is presented in Table 4. Lastly, Table 5 presents the correlation between the work stress and subjective well-being of elementary teachers in the public schools.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the responses on NUT Teacher Well-Being "Ready Reckoner" stress items.

Stress Survey Questions	No.	Min	Max	Mean	SD	DR
1. Do you feel able to concentrate on what you are doing at school?	104	2	5	4.01	.72	M
2. Do you feel that you are playing a useful part in school life?	104	2	5	4.25	.73	M
3. Do you feel capable of making decisions at school?	104	2	5	3.70	.75	M
4. Do you feel generally relaxed in your home and school life?	104	1	5	3.59	.82	M
5. Do you feel that most problems you encounter at school can be surmounted?	104	1	5	3.80	.79	M
6. Do you generally manage to keep your sense of humor?	104	2	5	3.87	.74	M
7. Do you feel happy at work, all things considered?	104	2	5	3.90	.72	M
8. Are you sleeping well?	104	1	5	3.71	1.02	M
9. Are you eating well?	104	1	5	4.02	.94	M
10. Are you drinking sensibly?	104	1	5	3.27	1.32	S
11. Do you cope well with changes to your job?	104	2	5	3.78	.72	M
12. Do you usually keep things in proportion?	104	2	5	3.73	.61	M
13. Do you have a reasonable amount of energy?	104	2	5	3.78	.65	M
14. Do you feel in control of your job?	104	1	5	3.82	.75	M
15. Do you feel you are coping well in the classroom?	104	2	5	4.15	.65	M
16. Do you receive appropriate support when you need it?	104	2	5	3.71	.72	M
17. Do you get well with your pupils?	104	2	5	4.13	.79	M
18. Do you get well with your colleagues?	104	2	5	4.14	.66	M
19. Do you get well with your managers?	104	2	5	3.87	.73	M
20. Do you feel free from the threat of bullying / harassment at school?	104	1	5	3.77	1.12	M
21. Do you enjoy a reasonable degree of autonomy, unaffected by excessive monitoring regimes?	104	2	5	3.52	.68	M
22. Do you manage to leave work "on time" fairly regularly?	104	2	5	4.14	.70	M
23. Do you find your job satisfying and fulfilling?	104	2	5	4.00	.74	M
24. Do you have a life outside work?	104	1	5	3.82	1.04	M
25. Do you intend to remain in teaching for the foreseeable future?	104	2	5	3.98	.84	M
26. Do you look forward to returning to school after a weekend or holiday?	104	1	5	3.62	.96	M
Grand Mean 3.85 Mostly						
Distribution on the Levels of Stress						
Levels of Stress		Frequency			Percent	
Low		53			50.96	
Moderate		51			49.04	
Total		104			100.00	

Legend for the DR (Descriptive Rating): 4.50-5.00 – Very much so (VM), 3.50-4.49 – Mostly (M), 2.50-3.49 – Sometimes (S), 1.50-2.49 – Not much (NM), 1.00-1.49 – Not at all (NA)

Table 1 presents information relevant to the profile of the stress instrument administered to the respondents. It reveals the minimum, maximum, means, standard deviation and descriptive ratings for all the responses of one hundred-four respondents.

With reference to the ratings, it can be gleaned that four items registered the highest mean ratings. These were: Item no. 2 (M=4.25, SD=0.73), "Do you feel that you are playing a useful part in school life?," Item no. 15 (M=4.15, SD=0.65) "Do you feel you are coping well in the classroom?," Item no. 18 (M=4.14, SD=0.66) "Do you get well with your colleagues?," and Item no. 22 (M=4.14, SD=0.70) "Do you manage to leave work "on time" fairly regularly?." It can be observed that the items with the highest mean ratings focused on positive attitude towards work and colleagues.

On the other hand, items with the lowest mean

ratings were: Item no.10 (M=3.27, SD=1.32), "Are you drinking sensibly?," Item, no.21 (M=3.52, SD=0.68), "Do you enjoy a reasonable degree of autonomy, unaffected by excessive monitoring regimes?," and Item, no.4 (M=3.59, SD=0.82) "Do you feel generally relaxed in your home and school life?." It can be inferred that there may be personal, familial and environmental factors that may contribute to the experience of stress among the respondents. Based on the grand mean (M=3.85) of the descriptive ratings of the responses, it can be noticed that the respondents mostly feel that they can withstand work-related stress factors, likewise, the rating suggest that the respondents have greater levels of well-being. The Table also shows that among the 104 respondents, 53 (50.96%) are experiencing low levels of stress and 51 (49.04%) have moderate levels of stress.

Table 2: Overall descriptive statistics of the responses on NUT Teacher Well-Being "Ready Reckoner" stress items.

Total Score	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Stress questions 1-26	67	129	100.08	12.16
Descriptive Rating	moderate evidence of stress	low evidence of stress	low evidence of stress	

Stress Level/Well-being benchmark: up to 50 - high evidence of stress/poor mental health, 51-100 - moderate evidence of stress/moderate level of well-being, more than 100- low evidence of stress/greater level of well-being

Table 2 shows the calculated total scores of the responses. Using the scoring of the NUT stress/well-

being instrument, which stated that, the higher the score, the higher the well-being, and having higher well-being mean having lower evidence of stress, the minimum mean rating of 67 is suggestive of the moderate evidence of stress and the maximum mean

rating of 129 indicates low evidence of stress, the average mean score of 100.08 exceeds the moderate level bracket. Thus, this indicates that the respondents in general manifest low levels of stress and greater levels of well-being.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the responses on Satisfaction with Life Scale items

SWB Survey Questions	No	Min	Max	Mean	SD	DR
1. In most ways my life is close to ideal	104	2	7	5.36	.94	SLA
2. The conditions of my life are excellent	104	2	7	5.12	1.10	SLA
3. I am satisfied with my life	104	1	7	5.55	1.22	A
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	104	1	7	5.20	1.22	SLA
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing	104	1	7	4.98	1.43	SLA
Grand Mean 5.24 Slightly Agree						
Distribution on the Levels of subjective well-being						
Levels of SWB	Frequency		Percent			
Extremely satisfied	19		18.27			
Satisfied	42		40.39			
Slightly satisfied	31		29.81			
Neutral	2		1.92			
Slightly dissatisfied	9		8.65			
Dissatisfied	1		0.96			
Total	104		100.00			

Legend for the DR (Descriptive Rating): 6.50-7.00 – Strongly agree (SA), 5.50-6.49 – Agree (A), 4.50-5.49 – Slightly agree (SLA), 3.50-4.49 – Neither agree nor disagree (N), 2.50-3.49 – Slightly Disagree (SLD), 1.50-2.49 – Disagree (D), 1.00-1.49 – Strongly disagree (SD)

Table 3 presents the itemized descriptive statistics of responses as regards to the level of SWB. It can be observed that that Item no. 3 (M=5.55; SD=1.22), “I am satisfied with my life” had the highest mean rating while Item no. 5 (M=4.98; SD=1.43) “If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing” had the lowest mean rating.

Based on the descriptive ratings for the mean values of the responses, the grand mean of 5.24 could mean that the respondents slightly agreed with the items in the SWLS. It can be assumed that there are still some domains in the lives of the respondents that still need improvement. However, the mean scores were also suggestive that the respondents were generally satisfied with their lives. The Table

also shows the distribution of the respondents according to their levels of SWB. Among the 104 respondents, 42 (40.39%) are satisfied with their lives while only one (0.96%) is dissatisfied. It is worth mentioning that those who are satisfied have major domains of their lives that are going well such as work, family, friends, leisure and personal development.

On the other hand, respondents who scored in the range of slightly dissatisfied and dissatisfied have a small to low level of life satisfaction and may have a number of domains that are not going well as manifested by unhappy family life or a significant problem at work, and the feeling of disappointment may serve as distraction.

Table 4: Overall descriptive statistics of the responses on Satisfaction with Life Scale items.

Total Score	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
SWB Questions 1-5	14	35	26.20	4.56
Descriptive Rating	Dissatisfied	Extremely satisfied	Satisfied	

SWLS benchmark: 5-9- Extremely dissatisfied, 10-14- Dissatisfied, 15-19- Slightly dissatisfied, 20 - Neutral, 21-25- Slightly satisfied, 26-30 - satisfied, 31-35- Extremely satisfied.

Table 4 summarizes the computed total scores of the responses on the levels of SWB. Based on Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin scoring of the SWLS instrument, a minimum mean rating of 14 suggests that respondents are substantially dissatisfied with their lives, they may have a number

of domains that are not going well, while a maximum mean rating of 35 reveals that respondents are extremely satisfied, they love their lives and feel that things are going very well. The average mean score of 26.20 implies that respondents generally are satisfied with their lives.

Table 5: Correlation between stress and subjective well-being of the teacher-respondents.

Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Stress vs SWB	0.519	0.000	Significant moderately positive correlation

Table 5 presents the correlation between the total scores in the NUT Teacher Well-Being “Ready Reckoner” and SWLS using the Pearson’s Product

Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). The strengths of relationships between variables were interpreted using the range of values of Pearson’s r

given by Mercado-del Rosario [13]. It was identified that SWB (p-value 0.00; r-value 0.52) positively correlated significantly and moderately with the low levels of work-related stress among the respondents.

It must be noted that based on the scoring guide of NUT Teacher Well-Being "Ready Reckoner," high scores are suggestive of greater levels of well-being and lower levels of stress while lower totals tend to indicate lower levels of well-being and elevated degrees of stress. On the other hand, high totals in the SWLS indicate higher levels of SWB while low scores suggest lower levels of SWB. Hence, the result suggests that respondents who have high scores in SWB were satisfied with their lives and have greater levels of well-being, possessing greater levels of well-being among respondents is an indication that they experience lower levels of stress.

5.2 Discussion and Conclusion:

The results revealed that the respondents have low to moderate levels of stress and those with low levels of work-related stress have a greater percentage. This implies that the respondents experience stress but are generally able to manage the pressures brought by the nature of their work. The results of this study were parallel with the findings of Roxas [20] which revealed that the stress levels of public school teachers in Baguio City, Philippines were at the normal level and the teachers were able to withstand the pressures brought about by stressful circumstances. Also, Panis [17] found that the perceived sources of stress by majority of the public school teachers in Palawan, Philippines were at the moderate level and the teachers have high level of stress tolerance. Similarly, the study of Eres and Atanasoska [2] revealed that Turkish teachers have mild levels of stress while Macedonian teachers had moderate levels of stress. In contrast, findings from the study of Putter [19] showed that teachers experience above average and high levels of stress while the study of Holeyannavar and Itagi revealed that most of primary school teachers have average to high levels of stress. Similarly, Sprenger found that primary school teachers felt teaching to be very stressful to extremely stressful. Likewise, Hanif, Tariq, and Nadeem found that teachers in Pakistan showed highest levels of stress at work.

With reference to slight agreement with the statements on SWLS by the respondent, it can be assumed that the respondents may still have some domains in their lives where they very much would like to improve. However, it must be noted that the mean score of the overall rating indicated that the respondents were generally satisfied with their lives.

Focusing on the significant moderate positive correlation between total scores in the SWLS and the scores in the NUT Teacher Well-Being "Ready Reckoner," such was suggestive that respondents with high scores in SWB were satisfied with their lives and have greater levels of well-being and

manifested lower levels of stress. Similar findings were reported by Cenkseven-Onder and Sari, where teachers who have trouble in coping with stressors at the workplace have low levels of subjective-well-being and life satisfaction and high level of negative effects and the teachers' abilities in coping effectively with bad and stressful events at the workplace may lead them to have higher level of subjective well-being. Moreover, Barganier [3] assumed that people who viewed life events as positive and pleasant experience tend to produce greater feelings of contentment and over-all well-being, while people who evaluate their life situations and experiences as unsatisfactory will likely to have higher levels of negative emotions.

5.3 Recommendations:

Despite the minimal percentage of respondents admitting being dissatisfied with their lives and have moderate evidence of stress, such finding must still not be taken for granted by the school administrators. It must be noted that the lack of support among administrators may aggravate the situation. Administrators can help teachers identify work-related stressors and create clear policies in dealing with such problems. It is also encouraged that teachers workloads be kept to manageable levels. There is also a need to conduct regular assessment of well-being and stress levels of teachers to identify the teachers under stress. Support groups must be established at schools to assist teachers who are struggling with stress. Stress reduction programs, relaxation techniques and other related trainings/seminars must be provided to teachers to give them helpful insights on healthy coping responses to job and personal or family stressors.

Authors' Contribution:

Dr. Glenn M. Calaguas, thesis adviser, guided Ms. Mary Ann D. Manlapaz, the main author, in the conceptualization and editing of the current study.

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