Struggles and Coping Strategies of Teachers Pursuing Graduate Studies:
A Basis for Intervention

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Abstract

Advanced degrees for teachers demonstrate a high level of knowledge and dedication to their specialization areas, enabling them to change curriculum objectives, adapt teaching strategies, and take on leadership roles to implement the systemic changes in education they desire. This phenomenological research using focus group discussion (FGD) was used to examine the struggles and coping strategies employed by graduate students who are attending their master's degree program at the College of SPEAR at Mindanao State University (Main), Marawi. The key informants were thirteen [13] teachers enrolled in the master's degree program at the College of Sports, Physical Education, and Recreation (CSPEAR) during SY 2022-2023. Data gathered using a semi-structured interview guide was thematically analyzed. It was discovered that the participants began their trip from scratch, encountered stressful situations, but were able to balance their struggles with a safety net over their heads in order to eventually complete their studies. The researcher suggested that, in light of these findings, graduate studies programs should offer opportunities for socialization and stress-relieving activities including exercise, meditation, and creative pursuits. Engaging in positive social interactions, consistent exercise, and cultural activities can all lead to an increase in happiness and wellbeing. The model developed from this study may be used to more research, and more in-depth examination of the title can also be done using various techniques.

Keywords: Coping strategies, Graduate studies, Intervention, Pursuing, Struggles, Teachers

1. Introduction

A teacher with a lot of dedication will never be happy with what they have already done. Instead, they will always look for new ways to help themselves grow in knowledge and understanding. The teaching and learning process is something that committed instructors are really passionate about. Advanced degrees for teachers demonstrate a high level of knowledge and dedication to the field, enabling them to change curriculum objectives, adapt teaching strategies, and take on leadership roles to implement the systemic changes in education they desire (Shamuratov & Alimbaev, 2022; Dudley, 2013).

The requirements of the educational system are getting harder and more complicated. The breadth of teachers' tasks and obligations has expanded. Teachers need to create and submit a large number of reports

which calls for specialized knowledge and abilities. Teachers are working hard to get their master's degrees as well as taking on the rigors of pursuing doctoral studies in order to satisfy these expectations (Jumamuratova, 2022).

The first level of graduate education is a master's degree or advanced degree (Henderson et al., 2023; Colombo, 2023). A bachelor's or undergraduate degree is normally needed in order to apply for a master's degree. A master's degree is likewise needed in order to apply for a doctoral degree. Some experts feel that master's degree study differs from earlier educational efforts in two ways: academically and psychologically (The Contributions of Postmodern Narratives to Master's Degree Students' Higher-Order Thinking Skills, 2016). A master's program must generate academic output in terms of intellectual output; as a result, it entails working on several rigorous research projects and finishing area-focused studies. The requirements of the educational system are getting harder and more complicated. The breadth of teachers' tasks and obligations has expanded (Naufal Akbar, 2022).

Teachers need to create and submit a large number of reports, which calls for specialized knowledge and abilities. Teachers are working hard to get their master's degrees as well as taking on the rigors of pursuing doctoral studies in order to satisfy these expectations. It is thought that doing this will help students become more proficient and capable of handling the problems posed by the ongoing improvement of the educational system (Han et al., 2020).

Master's students have a certain amount of ambition to complete their studies, but on their trip to do so, they confront hurdles that may impair their development (Gordon, 2016; Westerlaken, et al., 2019). Koca, (2018), identified various problems that master's students confront, such as uncomfortable occurrences in life, the student-supervisor relationship, and self-efficacy. In this regard note that as students' research stalls and they make little progress, their motivation tends to decline (Kalita, 2023).

Furthermore, choosing whether or not to pursue a master is a difficult decision because it involves investing time, effort, and money. There are also a few psychological facets specific to graduate study (Alexander, 2023). Graduate students can experience challenging emotions like tension and frustration. Stress is a sensation of mental or physical stress. It can result from anything that frustrates, enrages, or unnerves a person. Stress is the body's response to a demand or difficulty. Long-term stress can be detrimental to one's health (MedLinePlus, 2018).

In the United States, 93 percent of educators are facing high stress levels. As a result, high teacher stress levels are usually associated with poorer student results, such as lower grades and frequent behavior problems (Roebuck, 2023). While 72% of the teachers in the Philippines were found to be under stress at the moment (Fabelico & Afalla, 2020; Kotowski et al., 2022). According to the study, many educators revealed their experience with moderate to high levels of stress. The primary causes of this high stress are the high expectations of the pupils, the physical demands of teaching, and a lack of resources (Ling, 2023; Howard-Hamilton et al, 2023).

At the College of Sports, Physical Education, and Recreation, the programs for the Master of Science in Physical Education degree are offered. To complete the MSPE program, one must take 39 units. It takes two to three years to complete the program, though some finish it in four or five years. On average, the coursework will take approximately two years to complete, and one should expect to use the third year to do in-depth thesis writing (Pangket et al., 2023; Quinto, 2022).

Most of the students enrolled in the MSPE program at CSPEAR are advancing their own careers by teaching in basic education schools, colleges, and universities. Aside from working full-time, they are also raising children, managing a household, managing a business, and doing extra jobs. Because teaching and studying occur at the same time, the rate of stress among the students increases. Dealing with stress from handling overwhelming workloads can be difficult. According to DeStefano, (2023), workload is one of the

most commonly studied stressors for teachers, and it was assessed using descriptive terms such as time and workload pressure.

In order to provide a basis for intervention, this study aims to examine the challenges and coping mechanisms faced by teachers pursuing graduate studies at Mindanao State University (Main), at College of Sports, Physical Education, and Recreation.

2. Material and Methods

This study utilized qualitative research by phenomenological research using focus group discussion (FGD) was used to examine the struggles and coping strategies employed by graduate students who are attending their master's degree program at the College of SPEAR at Mindanao State University (Main), Marawi. The key informants were thirteen [13] teachers enrolled in the master's degree program at the College of Sports, Physical Education, and Recreation (CSPEAR) during SY 2022-2023.

This study employed interpretative phenomenology approach to qualitative research, a method of naturalistic inquiry that aims to get a thorough knowledge of social phenomena in their natural settings. For the study of human phenomena, qualitative researchers employ a variety of systems of inquiry as opposed to logical and statistical methods (Creswell, 2013). These systems of inquiry include biography, case studies, historical analysis, discourse analysis, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology. Focus group discussion (FGD) interviews were conducted face-to-face with the participants of the research to collect relevant data. In qualitative research, the researcher participates in the study while collecting data in a subjective manner.

Participants voluntarily consented to participate in the study; they were not pressured or compelled to do so by the researchers, who followed research ethics by requesting permission from the college administration and student teachers. In qualitative research, the interviewer plays a crucial role in the inquiry (Jesus, 2014). Data gathered using a semi-structured interview guide was thematically analyzed.

The research was carried out at CSPEAR, MSU (Main) Marawi, during the master's degree class activities. There are 13 student teachers enrolled in that subject who were utilized for the research during SY 2023 - 2024. An intentional and thorough enumeration of the participants was employed to collect the necessary data. When data saturation was achieved, no new themes could be gleaned from the analysis for further data about the topic under investigation (Ando et al., 2014).

3. Findings and Discussions

The topics that surfaced were given in response to the focus group discussion interview questions. The challenges, coping strategies, and suggestions and recommendation for support for student teachers, through theme analysis of the participant replies that were intelligently transcribed. Below are the generated themes and sub-themes. The researchers formulated the Model: *The Route to Sustainable support program,* on the generated themes from the participants' responses and significant findings of the study. The Model utilizes symbols representing live experiences of student teachers that were highly motivated to pursue their master degree as their efforts to become greater professional and leaders of tomorrow. The Model epitomizes the study's very nature – struggles and coping strategies of teachers pursuing graduate studies: a basis for intervention

On the premise of developing an intervention or support program for the student teachers in order to help them succeed and be prepared for future teaching, this model is intended to direct administrators and leadership at every university and institution that offers or has master's degrees up to the PhD level. In order to prepare for future leadership roles or to better themselves so they can impart more information to their pupils, student teachers are carrying out their responsibilities and pursuing their ambitions to rise to the top or further their studies.

Fig. 1 represents the themes and sub-themes that were generated in the study. These include the first image of a man and a woman seen standing on the school's pathway, representing the student teachers at the starting point of entering or starting their graduate studies program in every higher institution. The path on which they are standing with green arrow on black road track represents the journey they need to make in and out of the school where they are attending their program. The subsequent picture shows a red zigzag road with a white dash on it; this represents the stressful situations student instructors encountered while obtaining their master's degrees. It may also be seen in the challenges that individuals face when they pursue their academic goals. They arrived on the black road with a white dash after successfully navigating the difficult red zigzag route. Balance is the key, which shows the image of balance that was always used by the law officer. It shows that our lives or what we are doing need to be balanced, that is, 50/50. Whether we are engaging in business, studying, or working, there is room for us to balance everything that we are doing in order to cope, as a mechanism that the study's participants utilized or adopted. The participants in this study were able to maintain a healthy balance between their everyday obligations and their master's degree programs. The last and last image, which points to the safety net that protected them, depicts the location where the two people—a guy and a female—were covered by the net. It was indicated that the only way for participants in this study to study very well, as we can see in this image, and assimilate what they are reading while being covered by a safety net is for them to be supported by various means from the various institutions' leaders and administrative staff where they are coming out to study. The study was done at the College of Sports, Physical Education, and Recreation at Mindanao State University (Main) Marawi, which is reflected and made clear in the backdrop photograph.
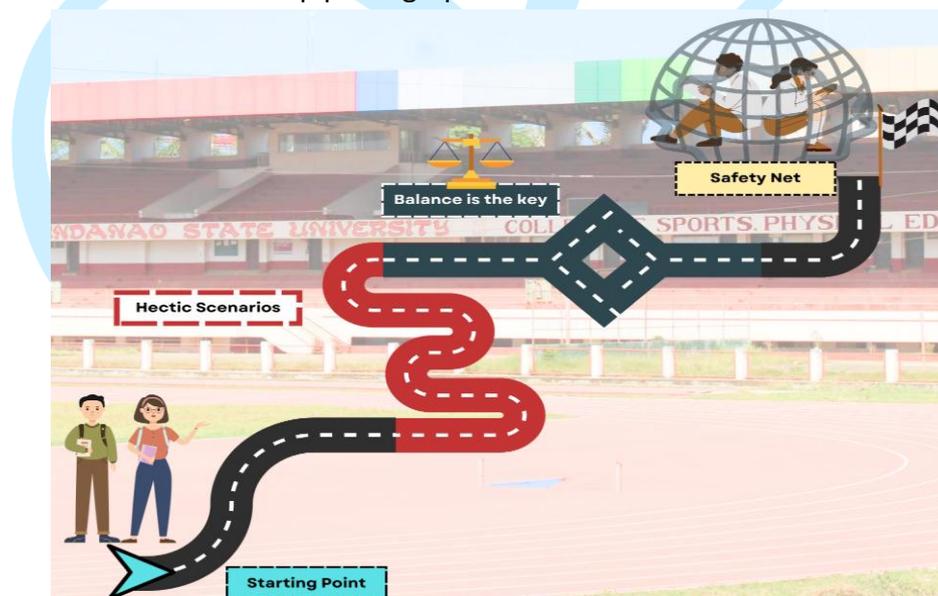

Fig. 1 The Route to Sustainable support Program

3.1 Theme 1: Starting Point

The research participants unanimously underscored the importance of pursuing their master's degree as their passport for better employment and promotions. Since majority of them are teachers and instructors, they find that through advanced studies, they will be able to aim for higher academic ranks in their college and university. One research participant who is from State University mentioned that in their institution, they follow a promotional system/mechanism that gives credence to their finished degree. If a faculty graduated from master's, or a PhD/EdD program, he will get assured to get the highest points for educational attainment criterion. This embodied under NBC 461. Corollary to this, according to Reyes (2018) a promotion is not only a way to add more responsibilities to an employee but is a major form of boosting employee motivation and morale. This results in high productivity and prevents your company from losing its valuable and important employees.

Another reason that they unanimously considered is for their personal satisfaction. They agreed that if someone has completed his advanced studies especially if it is master degree or PhD/EdD, this will give him a sense of prestige and increase self-esteem. They likened this feeling with that of Abraham Maslow's (Dar & Sakthivel, 2022; Hakim, 2022), Hierarchy of Needs, that as individual they crave for better view of life, that is, to aim for the apex of the hierarchy. By doing so, they are slowly achieving greater heights. This, to them, is very important in their quest for rightful place under the sun.

More so, they revealed during the interview that, their view of pursuing graduate studies as an academic shift. They find gratification in academic debate, brainstorming, sharing and discussing with intellectual individuals that would redound to enrichment of body of knowledge and finding solutions to the problems and challenges of the society. One participant shared that "*he loves conducting research because it is through this procedure that he is able to see the world in a larger context*". He wanted to share something on what the world needs such as finding solution to the problem on Physical education realm. Similar to this, Scully (2023) demonstrates that in order to advance knowledge and discover long-lasting solutions to societal issues, one must be willing to make sacrifices in order to delve into the research necessary to help them develop the necessary resilience skills in order to be effective school leaders in the future. Administration and school leadership have a significant impact on students' capacity to realize their potential.

Likewise, the reason that came out was their desire for recognition in a world of competition. One of the participants stated that in their institutions, "it is very relevant to pursue graduate studies. Most of his colleagues are PhD and MAPE graduates, which is why he is also inspired to achieve such status. This will give him an edge to teach at the college and graduate school levels.

Last but not least, some of them see graduate school as a possible salary booster. Even though it isn't now convertible to cash, they recognized that having this will open up more prospects for them after they graduated. One research participant said: *"Maaaring walang pera pa sa ngayon, more on expenditures pero kapag nag-materialize na, grumadweyt ka na, siguradong maraming magbabago sa buhay ko. Eto ang magiging competitive edge ko para marating ko ang rurok ng tagumpay"* [there might be no money as of now, it is more of expenditure, but if this will materialize and will graduate, for sure many will change in my life. This will be my competitive edge to achieve the pinnacle of success].

Because of these factors, Haltia et al. (2023) and Pope-Ruark (2022) emphasize that pursuing graduate studies is what everyone who aspires to be or currently holds the position of a teacher or instructor should do in order to be promoted or have a better life in the school they are in, and that higher education is a calling, not just a job, but in the study of Birhanu et al., (2022) graduate students who have never had a job before express positive as well as adverse experiences. The benefits came from the early learning opportunities they enjoyed, while the drawbacks came from the difficulties they encountered as newcomers to the workplace. They had to deal with issues including sexual harassment, a lack of understanding about the working world, language barriers, and economic and psychological difficulties.

3.2 Theme 2: Hectic Scenarios

The topic and related sub-themes that were produced in answer to question two are shown as follows: The research participants concurred and acknowledged that balancing their time, effort, and resources between job and graduate school is a challenge. Given that time is of the importance, they may feel worn out and drained. To meet deadlines, they must do all of their tasks quickly. According to the interview, these are specifically the difficulties and circumstances they ran into:

3.2.1 Rushing of Requirements

They acknowledged that they find it to be too difficult and exhausting to complete all of the graduate school's compulsory projects, papers, reports, and major tests, particularly when multiple professors are requesting

them to turn them in at the same time. These prevent them from working confidently and with ease. One study subject said that in order to catch up and complete the required report, he had to take a leave of absence.

In light of the situation, a teacher has informed his immediate boss that he is fulfilling the criteria rather than working for their firm or organization. This puts the participants under additional stress. He spoke in colloquial: *"Nahihiya ako sa immediate boss ko kasi nakita nya akong gumagawa ng research paper. Nabigyan ako ng memorandum ng dahil ditto kaya di ko na inulit. Nagigising na lang ako ng maaga para gumawa ng assignment"* [I am very ashamed to my immediate boss because he saw that I am doing a research paper. I was given a memorandum because of this that is why it did not happen again. I just woke up early to do my assignments]. Rushing projects and cramming for deadline is the usual scenario in almost of the cases of graduate school students. This is expected since almost all are working students.

3.2.2 Family conflict

Due to their admission in graduate school, they further encountered family discord. This occurs when the spouse is unfamiliar with the details of being a graduate student. Typically, the husband criticizes his wife for failing to carry out her household responsibilities. One member even admitted that she was considering changing the subject in light of this circumstance. She regrets that his spouse has responded in this way, even if it will ultimately be to the family's advantage. Even though her spouse doesn't care, she revealed that she has made every effort in her life to complete advanced education for her family.

Family support is important for maintaining a stress-free atmosphere, especially when pursuing a higher education (Hasib et al., 2022). Another participant said that since *she is aware of what is going on in their school, she has no issues with family support in her situation*. She talks about the requirements and how challenging graduate school is for her and her husband. Although she does it in a way that demonstrates her family's unconditional love, support, and compassion, as was also demonstrated in the research by Smith et al. (2022) because beginning graduate studies while carrying out family obligations is a demanding and stressful scenario for a teacher, especially if no one will look after their immediate needs.

3.2.3 Employer's monitoring and supervision

Many businesses actively watch or monitor their staff members to find out what they do after hours. This was also the experience that the study's participants had. Since it was originally discovered that they were working while completing their graduate school assignments, they were subject to intense supervision by both their immediate supervisor and the principal. The study participants continued, "If they have flagrantly broken the company's or agency's policy, they also fear." They could be fired from the company as a result of this.

There needs to be a distinction made between job and study in analysis. The supervisor is only carrying out his or her duty to make sure that the subordinates are operating within the bounds of their authority and to the standards set forth in their handbook. The student worker must efficiently manage his time in order to balance the obligations of his job with his desire for academic achievement.

In spite of the fact that most supervisors and employers do not want their subordinates to participate in study programs that may divert their attention from their work, even when it will be advantageous to the institutions in the long run, this is reflected in the studies of Sidak et al. (2023) and Furterer and Wood (2021), which explain the major roles that the employer and supervisor play on the lookout for their employees and their responsibilities as ambassadors of their institutions.

All people of the nation must have access to a high-quality education, according to the Philippine Constitution, in particular Article 14, Sections 1 and 2. The Administrative Code of 1987, also known as Executive Order No. 292, also specifies in Section 1 that "Every official and employee of the government is an

asset or resource to be valued, developed, and utilized in providing primary services to society." The aforementioned legal foundation suggests that student instructors can gain from improving and growing as individuals in order to contribute to the schools where they teach or belong. This is a call to action for concerned teachers and curriculum supervisors, particularly those who are overseeing the teachers in different programs, to take action to address the current problems the study participants are experiencing and to put in place a support system or adviser for the student teachers.

3.2.4 Terror and demanding professor

One of the participants remarked that *she once had a terrifying professor who was unreasonable in her demands*. She then changes the subject since she is overwhelmed by the numerous reports, projects, outputs, and the like. She acknowledged that she cannot compromise on both the duties of her job and being a mother to five children. She must thus give up one item, namely her graduate studies. She saw this as a chance to gain some valuable lessons. She also advised giving up if you've tried your hardest but still find it challenging. She acted in that manner. It is inevitable that students may encounter teachers who do not fully comprehend their circumstances, but all they are interested in is your devotion to your studies and the tasks you are assigned. This was also revealed by Bender et al. (2022) that coping with parenting and studying is not what will go easy for woman with five to six children, this was supported by Fadare et al., (2021) whose work revealed the challenges that many parent faced when nurturing their kids.

3.2.5 Multi-Tasking at School

Being a multi-tasking employee was another difficult situation that this particular teacher discussed (Cumming et al., 2022). In fact, one person has a lot of responsibilities because she teaches at a small school. Since they lack non-teaching staff, she is responsible for all *correspondence preparation, receipt, and processing as well as financial report preparation and processing*. She is struggling to manage her time while also considering the requirements for her doctoral program. She needs to work even harder to meet deadlines, especially because the reporting requirements set by her district supervisor are overly severe. This was in accordance with the study of Rivera et al., (2023), which stated that It might be difficult for student teachers who are also parents to balance their academic goals with their family commitments. To reduce the shame of not performing their reproductive tasks, they needed to multitask and put in extra effort.

3.2.6 Torn between Work and Studies

A problem that came up during the interview process was while the program was being accredited, despite the fact that the participants had a variety of experiences and circumstances on how they dealt with obstacles and difficulties between employment and study. The task force chair for the student development area is this particular graduate student. There are several documentation preparations that need to be done before certification itself. He needs to locate, file, and package materials according to institutional format. For the lecturer, who must balance his graduate school responsibilities with the requirements of accreditation, this is too stressful and difficult. The Department of Education's carpet monitoring is a further circumstance where balancing employment and study is difficult. This applies to enrolled students whose employers are public schools. When activities are planned and unplanned for the purpose of monitoring and reviewing school paperwork, carpet supervision is in effect. One study subject claimed that he had to *push his lesson plan to make up for the days that were lost in order to meet the graduate school's deadline for the submission of the necessary paperwork* (Palanisamy et al., 2021).

Another participant mentioned that *occasionally, even on weekends, their principle compels them to report to school*. This is especially true when students have to meet with their competitors for review sessions

before academic tournaments. These weekends are ideal for them to focus on practices before a game. These factors combined to create a hardship for them, which prompted them to skip their master's program sessions on Saturdays. When their immediate supervisor demanded that they attend class in order to prepare their kids for the drum and bugle tournament, few participants felt the same way. They struggle to effectively complete their graduate studies due to these and other obstacles.

Teaching under pressure even on the weekends can be difficult while pursuing a master's degree because many higher education institutions occasionally schedule weekends so that teachers can attend their various classes and programs (Liang & Lin, 2021). Teachers without master classes shouldn't feel as isolated because that is their time to connect and interact with their families and friends (Rodriguez et al., 2022). The study's findings support the necessity to solve these problems so that head teachers, supervisors, or administrators might consider allowing staff to work independently to support high standards of instruction in the classrooms.

Another participant brought up how his advanced education and job might clash, particularly when his superiors are envious of him on both a personal and a professional level. He regrets that his direct supervisor is impeding his ambitions to pursue higher studies rather than fully supporting them. He speculated that it may be envy in the workplace. He is not making any mention of graduate school because of this. He expressed: *"Ang nakakainis, yong boss ko. Parang may insecurity sa akin. Akala mo naman kukunin ko posisyon nya",* [What I do not like is that he has insecurities. As if I will be taking over his position].

In addition, it was reported that virtually all of their teachers regularly required graduate students to present their requirements on a set timetable. When everything needs to be turned in before the semester's final exams, this frequently occurs. Since their teachers had previously warned them that failing to submit on time would result in a failing grade or an incomplete mark, their stress levels increased. Other teachers were fairly hard about sticking to the deadline, even though some of their students sought for an extension to submit the necessary documentation. Because of this, the majority of them raced to meet the deadline.

This was in line with research by Santhi and Adilakshmi (2021), which describes the difficulties many higher education instructors experienced and how they overcame them to build a successful future. Despite the difficulties you may face as a teacher or graduate student, these difficulties shouldn't prevent you from achieving your goals. In their quest and justification for the difficulties, the study's participants disclosed the stressful situations they encountered while attending graduate school and at their jobs (Aranda et al., 2021).

3.3 Theme 3: Balance is the Key

Coping strategies or approaches might be seen of as a way of escaping one's stress into the job, which is a potential source of stress. Nevertheless, graduate students are not helpless against the impacts of professional stress. Both their professional and personal life can benefit from learning how to manage job stress (Leoni & Owen, 2023).

The research participants agreed and admitted that in order to succeed, they must balance their time, effort, and resources between their work and graduate school. The first coping strategy that the research participants identified was the identification of their stress triggers, which they described as being their personalities, experiences, and other distinctive traits that affect how people respond to and manage with stress. Events and situations that upset their coworkers may not concern them. They might prevent stress by this method.

To stop being troubled, people must identify the underlying problem. Several of the participants stated: *"Kung gusto mong maging masaya, iwasan ang nag-ca-cause ng stress. Dapat itaguyod ang positive vibes lagi para maiwasang madismaya. Kasi kapag nakita mo o naramdaman mo yong stress, parang bad day na the whole day"* [If you really want to be happy, you have to avoid the cause of stress.

We must always promote positive vibes so that you will not be frustrated. [If you see and feel stress every time, your whole day will become a bad day.] Since their enrollment in graduate school is sometimes causing stress, they explicitly stated that they have to see the beauty in it so that they can grow as individuals.

Another identified coping strategy they emphasized was tackling their stress triggers. Once they identified their stress triggers, they considered each situation or event and looked for ways to resolve it. Facing these triggers will make them realize that they are strong and can face their fears. As they said, although these stressors are predominantly coming from work and graduate school, they are trying their best to balance them so that both aspects are given time and effort.

The power of optimism was also stated by one. They said that keeping a sense of humor and practicing optimism—the idea that nothing actually changes, but how you perceive it does—are some of the finest advice and techniques. These techniques are excellent for use in many of the situations they listed as stressors where they have little control over what occurs and they need to view their stressors as challenges rather than threats or alter how they react to their circumstances in order to reduce some of the stress involved.

They seek for channels for counseling and communication in a similar way. The participants thought that by being open and honest about their issues with friends and family, they would be able to relieve their stress linked to both school and studying. For advice on how to lead a balanced life, many who work in schools even spoke with their guidance counselors, who are psychologists. By assisting these adolescents in navigating challenging life circumstances like academic pressure and school stress, counseling is a powerful approach to have a significant impact on their lives.

Baksa and Branyiczki (2023) also made a point of emphasizing how working together with people in an organizational context may help us resolve our problems when there is sufficient communication and counseling. Another area noted was the influence of optimism. They said that keeping a sense of humor and practicing optimism—the idea that nothing actually changes but how you perceive it does—are some of the finest advice and techniques. These techniques are excellent for use in many of the situations they listed as stressors where they have little control over what occurs and need to view their stressors as challenges rather than threats or alter how they react to their circumstances in order to reduce some of the stress involved (Siddique et al., 2023).

Finally, the participants opined that balance is the key. The difficulty arises when one deviates from what is being scheduled. One has to stick with the schedule and plan. The reason for that is that when they plan things, they always stay informed, which means they know when they will be able to finish a particular assignment or college project. They can always include breaks or a small outing as part of the schedule.
It will serve as a motivator to follow the timetable and be aware of when to complete each task; otherwise, they risk having a mountain of work, including additional tasks that they were unaware of since they failed to plan. It will be much simpler for them to arrange their lives between education, employment, and personal life if they write things down, keep notes, and plan ahead, according to one participant's summary of the advice.

The student teachers learned coping mechanisms during all of these troubles and difficulties, but they didn't let it prevent them from moving forward with their education. This was in line with the study of Wang et al. (2022), which explained how teachers use similar coping strategies to solve their problems.

3.4 Theme 4: Safety Net
Every organization and institution that desires success must be prepared to provide enough support for its staff members as well as to provide opportunities for them to advance in their careers in ways that will benefit the organizations and institutions in which they find themselves (Fadare et al., 2021). The term "safety net" in this sense refers to the protection and assistance student teachers will have or experience while they

are pursuing their education; this support might be given by any organization that wants to see their instructors succeed and develop so that they can be of value to the organizations for which they are working. The safety net can also assist people in fostering comradery and partnerships among their employers, superiors, or peers, according to the research of Staddon (2022) and Tang and Peng (2022).

3.4.1 Provisions for scholarship

Some of the participants said that in order to encourage and urge them to continue pursuing their higher degrees, their school or organization should offer sufficient scholarships. They bemoaned the fact that they now find their jobs to be torturous since, rather than encouraging them, they feel demoralized for being discouraged from pursuing such a career and professional development. Yet another participant made a quipped *"Kung may scholarship, madaling matapos ang doctorate degree. Hindi ko na proproblemahin pa ang pera para matapos ang aking inaasam sa buhay".* [If there is a scholarship, I could easily finish my master's degree. I will not have problem any more about money. In this way, I could achieve the desires of my life]. In their study on the subject of education, Cahayati and Santoso (2022) claim that encouraging teachers and students to participate in scholarship program or scholar programs in Asia will benefit both the recipients of the awards and the nation they represent. This will hasten the growth of public diplomacy and enhance the caliber of interstate relations between nations. Student exchanges to several Asian nations might result from this scholarship. The use of this diplomacy is particularly distinctive in that it promotes collaboration, which results in respect and admiration for one another and mutual gain. This was aligned with the statement of the participants when they said, I wish that our schools could collaborate with other schools or with other countries to benefit me from scholarships in order to finish my master's degree, One of the participants in turn.

3.4.2 Deloading of Workload

The Teachers' Workload Policy: Its Impact on Teachers in Philippine Public Schools has been reported by Tarraya (2023). Its results showed that excessive workloads had an impact on teachers' general effectiveness and efficiency. Furthermore, as education is essential to supporting the Philippine economy, the government may provide for improvements in both access and quality of education. Policymakers must do a thorough assessment and analysis of the policy and reduce workloads so that the teachers embarking on study will be deloaded in order to improve. The institution's administrators can enhance the staffing system, recruit more non-teaching staff, and consider initiatives run by other government organizations. The participants who work as university instructors also mentioned that if given the chance to make a suggestion to the administration, they would suggest workload deloading to reduce the number of teaching hours so that they could spend more time on their studies, particularly when writing their dissertations. He proceeded by saying *that in order to write a thesis, one must acquire or collect data, particularly if the topic is regional in scope*. Deloading will enable participants to fully concentrate on data collection, an essential step for producing superior study results. This was supported by the study of Olapane et al., (2023) which shared share the same sentiments with the rest of the faculty on deloading for them to be able to focus on research which can contribute to the growth of the personnel and institutions to strengthen its support for research and publication endeavors. This was further stressed by Batani and Labon (2022), who claim that when faculty members are overburdened with their assigned job or duties—which include several chores to complete and extend beyond working hours—they may earn incentives or compensation increases to otherwise deloading their duties.

3.4.3 Team Building Activities

It takes two to tango, and two or three individuals cannot walk together unless they are in agreement, according to Liu et al. (2022). When it comes to a cohesive group, Pettalongi and Ubadah (2022) discovered

that the team-building strategy is also capable of enhancing team performance in carrying out their responsibilities. One participant thought of team building as a mechanism to unload stresses. According to him, *the success of most organizations depends on the ability of individuals to build effective teams*. The basic objectives of team building are to increase motivation and output. Groups may overcome political and interpersonal obstacles, get rid of distractions, and have fun when they are taken out of the workplace (Boulanger, 2023). This is reinforced by Wahyuningtyas et al, (2023), stating that one of the most powerful reasons for team building is to get results. Through a series of planned team building events that are fun and motivational, teams build skills like communication, planning, problem-solving and conflict resolution. These team-building activity ideas help facilitate long-term team building through fostering genuine connections, deeper discussions, and processing. In order to achieve this, administrators and supervisors of higher education institutions must not only encourage teacher and student participation in team-building activities but also involve stakeholders who will help them examine all crucial project decisions through the lens of sustainability in order to advance their studies, enhance results, and develop a valuable value proposition for each institution, which will later be recognized as crucial proof of completed success.

3.4.4 Study Leave

The proposal for a study leave was another notion that was made. Since this is a component of the majority of state university and college faculty development programs, it doesn't present a difficulty for students attending those institutions. However, this also applies to organizations that do not view study leave as a crucial component of human resource development. Their labor union or organization may start a conversation to incorporate this as one of the perks or privileges if it is a private company or business. For the management to support its position, they must provide compelling reasoning for their claims. Other private businesses or institutions really practice this, and their staff members benefit from paid study leave. Undoubtedly, there must be certain requirements or credentials before a worker is given such a privilege. In their studies, Attard and Holmes (2022) and Bendtsen et al. (2022) provided support for the aforementioned study, which shows that every institution should look for methods to prepare itself and let its instructors and staff to take advantage of study leave by participating in various development programs. Their research provides insights on the necessity of collaboration and collegial relationships for long-term professional growth, as well as the importance of providing continuing education courses to their employees so that they can advance their own practices. According to the study, school cultures might change to become more collaborative if instructors were given the opportunity to develop their cooperation tactics and structures or were given study leave. Teachers said that the recognition and encouraging gestures of colleagues and leadership had supported growth, empowered them, and encouraged them to become active agents of change, drawing attention to how cognitive and emotional components are linked during developmental processes.

3.4.5 Sponsoring Stress Management Seminar/ Training

There has to be a program that educates staff members on certain stress management techniques and excellent practices. This is one method of teaching employees how to deal with challenging and trying circumstances so that they all have a calm and self-assured body and mind. In order to provide a stress-free atmosphere, the stress management program may also include other related activities such as massage treatment, mental health awareness, yoga courses, team building, and many more interventions.

The qualitative data provided, stress is unavoidable in all spheres of life, including job, school, and personal relationships. Stress is a common part of most occupations, and it may have an impact on workers at all organizational levels, including front-line staff, managers, and senior leaders. While some stress is normal,

excessive and persistent stress is problematic. Everyone may use a few techniques to control and lower their personal stress levels and achieve a healthy work-life balance.

According to Zhao et al., (2022) According to their research, teachers who report low workloads and low levels of stress at work would exhibit a high professional identity, while those who report high workloads and high levels of stress at work would exhibit a low professional identity. This stress has an effect that extends beyond what is experienced at work and school. The stress people experience at work and at school typically has an effect on all facets of their lives. Stress, burnout, and anxiety can shift from one scenario to another, and how this happens depends on the individual, as further explained by Butao et al. (2021) and Fadare et al. (2022). It is also crucial to keep in mind our function as partners representing various disciplines and professions. As professionals, it is our responsibility to make sure that each teacher receives client-specific and practitioner-competent treatment in order to properly identify and treat anxiety and burnout brought on by work or study. Participating in essential stress management programs might reduce stress or burnout by engaging in leisure and sports activities.

Most of the time, stress follows these student-teachers home and affects their personal life and interactions with their wives, children, and other loved ones. Many people acknowledged that they had used prescription drugs to treat the consequences of stress and its symptoms, such as emotional issues, sleeplessness, and anxiousness. Some people continue to have substance addiction relapses as a result of the stress, while others have turned to drink or drugs to cope with the impacts of high everyday stress (Mittal et al., 2022).

Finally, by engaging experts in the industry to offer the program to the relevant agency, a stress management program may be implemented into every institution's curriculum and educate instructors and students on various ways to handle stress, burnout at work, and reading anxiety. The most effective stress management strategies often incorporate a variety of stress-relieving techniques that treat stress physiologically and mentally while also promoting resilience and coping mechanisms.

4. Conclusion

According to the research, MSPE students encounter a variety of challenges alongside their employment and studies. To lessen stress, administrators should urge teachers enrolled in master's degree programs to inform administrators of their results and provide instructors with more strategies for coping with difficulties. Additionally, the graduate studies chairperson should provide chances for interaction and stress-relieving practices like exercise, meditation, and creative endeavors. Increased happiness and well-being can result from engaging in rewarding social interactions, regular exercise, and cultural pursuits. The coping strategies outlined in Coping Mechanisms with Stress at Work and in Graduate Studies should be made available to teachers who are under stress. The model crafted from this study can be used for further study, and extended research can also be conducted using other methods to look into the title.

Declaration of Conflict

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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