

Prevalence of Occupational Stress and Its Effect on the Work Performance of Public Elementary School Teachers

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Abstract

This study examined the prevalence of occupational stress and its perceived effect on the work performance of public elementary school teachers in Gandara I District, Schools Division of Samar, during School Year 2024-2025. Anchored on the Job Demand-Control Model, Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, and Social Cognitive Theory, the study employed a descriptive-correlational research design involving 134 public elementary school teachers selected through simple random sampling with proportionate allocation. Data were gathered using a validated researcher-made survey questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Findings revealed that occupational stress was moderately prevalent overall, with learners' misbehavior emerging as the highest-rated stressor, followed by work overload, while stress related to the working environment was slightly prevalent. Occupational stress also had a moderate perceived effect on teachers' overall work performance, particularly in content knowledge and pedagogy and the learning environment. Significant differences in occupational stress and its effects on work performance were observed according to age and position, with older teachers and Master Teachers generally reporting greater stress and stronger performance-related effects. Age emerged as the only profile variable that significantly affected occupational stress in the overall model. The study concluded that workload, learner behavior, and selected demographic and professional characteristics are important considerations in supporting teacher well-being and performance. It recommended improving school resources, reducing unnecessary workload, strengthening classroom-management support, promoting work-life balance and stress-management initiatives, and providing responsive professional development, particularly for older teachers and Master Teachers. The study supports SDG 3, Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 4, Quality Education, and SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth. Its sustainability impact lies in promoting teacher well-being, supportive working conditions, professional effectiveness, and the long-term resilience and quality of educational services.

Keywords: Classroom Management, Learners' Misbehavior, Occupational Stress, Professional Development, Public Elementary School Teachers, Teacher Well-Being, Work Overload, Work Performance, Working Environment

1. Introduction

Teaching involves sustained instructional, interpersonal, organizational, and administrative demands that can affect educators' occupational well-being and professional functioning. Recent reviews have shown that teacher stress and burnout are associated with work-related pressures, psychological strain, reduced well-being, and conditions within the school environment (Agyapong et al., 2022; Nwoko et al., 2023). Teacher well-being is also closely connected with social relationships, teaching quality, professional functioning, and other important

educational outcomes (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Dreer, 2023). For public elementary school teachers, occupational stress is particularly important because teachers simultaneously manage instructional responsibilities, classroom behavior, curriculum requirements, assessment, professional development, and institutional expectations. Recent research indicates that workload, student behavior, inadequate support, time pressure, and working conditions can contribute to teacher stress and burnout (Carroll et al., 2022; Elliott et al., 2024). These concerns provide the basis for examining occupational stress among public elementary school teachers in Gandara I District, Schools Division of Samar, during School Year 2024–2025. Specifically, this study focuses on poor working environment, work overload, and learners' misbehavior and examines their effects on different dimensions of teachers' work performance.

Occupational stress among teachers develops through the interaction of job demands, workplace conditions, available resources, and teachers' capacity to respond to professional pressures. Agyapong et al. (2022) found that stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression remain important concerns among teachers and are associated with individual and occupational factors. Similarly, Nwoko et al. (2023) identified multiple personal, interpersonal, and organizational influences on teachers' occupational well-being, demonstrating that teacher stress cannot be understood solely as an individual concern but must also be considered within the conditions in which teachers perform their work. Workload is particularly relevant to teacher stress. Teachers are expected to prepare lessons, conduct instruction, assess learner performance, maintain classroom order, communicate with stakeholders, complete documentation, and perform other professional responsibilities. Wang et al. (2025) found that perceived workload among primary and secondary teachers was associated with work engagement through different forms of stress. Their findings showed that workload can function differently depending on whether demands are perceived as manageable challenges or as hindrances that consume resources and interfere with professional functioning. This demonstrates that the effects of workload depend not only on the quantity of assigned tasks but also on teachers' appraisal of demands and the resources available to address them. The working environment and behavioral demands of learners are also significant. Carroll et al. (2022) found that environmental and intrapersonal conditions contribute to teacher stress and burnout, while Elliott et al. (2024) showed that teacher-reported stress in elementary schools was associated with perceived emotional and instrumental support, student academic functioning, and student behavioral functioning. Such findings are particularly relevant to public elementary teachers because classroom management and learner behavior form part of their everyday professional responsibilities. Occupational stress can consequently extend beyond personal discomfort and influence broader professional functioning. Teacher well-being has been associated with teaching quality, teacher-student relationships, professional retention, and student-related outcomes (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Dreer, 2023). Thus, examining occupational stress together with work performance provides a more comprehensive understanding of how workplace conditions may affect teachers' capacity to perform their educational responsibilities.

Recent literature identifies three closely related themes relevant to the present study: occupational demands and workload, working environment and learner behavior, and the consequences of stress for teachers' professional performance and well-being. The first theme concerns workload and occupational demands. High workloads can reduce the time and psychological resources available for instruction, preparation, assessment, professional development, and personal recovery. Wang et al. (2025) found an overall negative relationship between perceived workload and work engagement, while also demonstrating that the effects of workload vary depending on whether teachers perceive demands as challenging or obstructive. Similarly, Carroll et al. (2022) identified environmental demands as important contributors to teacher stress and burnout. These findings indicate that workload should be understood not simply as the number of tasks assigned to teachers but as a combination of demands, available resources, perceived control, and the capacity to manage competing professional responsibilities. The second theme concerns working conditions, learner behavior, and institutional support. Elliott et al. (2024) found that student behavioral functioning and teachers' perceived emotional and instrumental support were significantly related to teacher stress in elementary schools. Nwoko et al. (2023) similarly showed that occupational well-being is shaped by factors operating at individual, relational, and organizational levels. These findings support examining poor working environment and learners' misbehavior as distinct but interconnected sources of occupational stress. The third theme concerns the effects of occupational stress on professional functioning and well-being. Agyapong et al. (2022) documented the substantial literature connecting teaching with stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression, while Dreer (2023) found that teacher well-being has implications for professional retention, teacher-student relationships, and student outcomes. Hascher and Waber (2021) likewise identified connections between teacher well-being and teaching quality. Consequently, sustained occupational stress may have implications not only for the teacher as an employee but also for the quality and continuity of educational processes. Recent evidence further indicates that interventions can contribute to reducing teacher distress. Beames et al. (2023), in a systematic review and meta-analysis of intervention programs targeting teachers' mental health, burnout, and well-being, found evidence supporting structured interventions for improving aspects of teachers' psychological functioning. This reinforces the relevance of developing professional support responsive to the stressors identified among teachers rather than treating occupational stress solely as an individual responsibility.

At the global level, maintaining a sufficiently supported teaching workforce has become an important educational sustainability concern. The Global Report on Teachers emphasizes the importance of teacher recruitment, retention, professional support, working conditions, and teacher well-being in building resilient education systems and advancing quality education (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024). These concerns demonstrate that teacher stress and working conditions are not isolated institutional matters but form part of broader challenges affecting the sustainability and quality of education systems. International empirical evidence similarly demonstrates that teacher stress is associated with workload, school conditions, social and organizational resources, and learner-related demands. Meta-analytic evidence from Zhou et al. (2024) indicates that teacher well-being is associated with a range of personal and professional factors, while Wang et al. (2025) emphasizes the importance of workload and teachers' appraisal of occupational demands. Together, these studies reinforce the need for educational institutions to consider both individual and workplace conditions when addressing teacher well-being. In the Philippines, recent studies reflect comparable concerns. Saldua and Aranguren (2023), studying public elementary school teachers, examined workplace stress in relation to workload, leader support, human relations, teaching environment, instructional resources, coping, and instructional performance. Obrero and Serviñas (2024) likewise reported substantial occupational stress among public school teachers in Central Philippines, particularly in instruction management and the working environment, and identified a significant relationship between occupational stress and performance. These findings indicate that occupational stress remains relevant within Philippine public-school settings and that its sources extend across instructional, environmental, and organizational dimensions. Current national policy also acknowledges workload and noninstructional responsibilities as issues affecting the work of Filipino public-school teachers. Department of Education Order No. 002, s. 2024 directed the immediate removal of administrative tasks from public school teachers to enable greater concentration on teaching responsibilities (Department of Education, 2024a). DepEd Order No. 005, s. 2024 subsequently rationalized teachers' workload and provided policies concerning teaching hours and overload compensation (Department of Education, 2024b). These policies strengthen the contemporary relevance of studying workload and working conditions among public-school teachers. Within Gandara I District, Schools Division of Samar, the present study examines these broader concerns within a specific public elementary school context. The original study identifies limitations in resources and facilities, demanding workloads, and varied institutional and community support as conditions that may place additional demands on teachers. It therefore focuses specifically on poor working environment, work overload, and learners' misbehavior as occupational stressors and examines their effects on work performance. This district-level focus is necessary because the nature and intensity of occupational demands may vary according to school context, available resources, teacher characteristics, and local working conditions.

The study remains anchored primarily on the Job Demand-Control Model of Karasek (1979). Although this source falls outside the five-year publication period, it is retained because it is the original theoretical work and therefore qualifies under the exception for original theories and models. The model proposes that occupational strain is influenced by the interaction between job demands and the amount of decision latitude or control available to workers. In the present study, poor working conditions, work overload, and learners' misbehavior represent occupational demands that may become more stressful when teachers have insufficient control or resources to manage them effectively. The study is further supported by the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), another original theoretical source retained under the five-year policy exception. The model explains that stress depends partly on individuals' appraisal of environmental demands and their perceived capacity to respond to them. Applied to teachers, similar working conditions may be experienced differently depending on how demands are evaluated and what coping or support resources are available. This perspective is consistent with more recent findings showing that workload can produce different professional outcomes according to whether demands are perceived as challenges or hindrances (Wang et al., 2025). The Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura (1986) provides the third theoretical foundation. It is retained as the original source of the theory and emphasizes reciprocal relationships among personal factors, behavior, and environmental influences. In the context of occupational stress, teachers' beliefs about their capabilities can influence how they approach demanding professional situations, while workplace experiences can in turn affect motivation, engagement, and professional functioning. Recent meta-analytic evidence showing that teacher well-being is associated with both personal and professional resources supports the continuing relevance of considering this interaction (Zhou et al., 2024). Conceptually, the study considers the profile of public elementary school teachers in terms of age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, position, and grade level taught. Occupational stress is assessed through poor working environment, work overload, and learners' misbehavior, while its effect on work performance is examined through content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development. The findings provide the basis for a proposed professional development program intended to address occupational stress and support teachers' work performance.

Contemporary research provides substantial evidence concerning teacher stress, burnout, occupational well-being, workload, school support, and professional functioning (Agyapong et al., 2022; Nwoko et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2024). However, findings also demonstrate that occupational stress is shaped by contextual factors, including the

nature of job demands, available organizational support, classroom conditions, and teachers' appraisal of their workload (Carroll et al., 2022; Elliott et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). Consequently, findings obtained from international settings or different Philippine school divisions cannot automatically represent the conditions experienced by public elementary school teachers in Gandara I District. Although recent Philippine studies have examined workplace stress and teacher performance (Saldua & Aranguren, 2023; Obrero & Serviñas, 2024), the updated literature reviewed for this Introduction provides limited district-specific evidence concerning the combined effects of poor working environment, work overload, and learners' misbehavior on the multiple dimensions of work performance among public elementary school teachers in Gandara I District. Moreover, national policies introduced in 2024 to reduce administrative tasks and rationalize teacher workload indicate continuing institutional concern regarding the demands placed on public-school teachers (Department of Education, 2024a, 2024b). The present study addresses this contextual gap by determining the prevalence level of occupational stress and examining its effect on the work performance of public elementary school teachers in Gandara I District during School Year 2024–2025. It further determines whether occupational stress and its effects differ when teachers are grouped according to their profile and identifies which profile variables affect occupational stress. The study is deliberately delimited to the working environment, workload, and learner behavior and relies on teachers' self-reported perceptions. The findings are intended to provide a locally grounded basis for proposing a professional development program responsive to occupational stress and teacher performance.

The study is directly aligned with SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 4 - Quality Education, and SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth. These goals are interconnected within the context of the teaching profession because maintaining quality education requires a workforce whose health, professional capacity, and working conditions are adequately supported. The Sustainable Development Goals framework recognizes health, education, and decent work as fundamental dimensions of sustainable development (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2024). The study contributes to SDG 3 through its attention to occupational stress and teacher well-being. Contemporary evidence shows that teacher stress and burnout have important implications for mental and occupational health (Agyapong et al., 2022; Nwoko et al., 2023). By identifying prevalent stressors among public elementary school teachers, the study may provide evidence for professional support responsive to conditions affecting educators' well-being. The study aligns with SDG 4 because teachers are central to the delivery and sustainability of quality education. UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) emphasize the importance of adequately supported and motivated teachers in achieving resilient education systems and quality learning. Since the present study examines how occupational stress affects dimensions of teaching performance, its findings are relevant to sustaining effective instructional practice and educational quality. The study also relates to SDG 8, particularly through its concern with sustainable working conditions, workload, professional well-being, and productivity. Philippine policies aimed at removing administrative tasks and rationalizing teacher workload further demonstrate the importance of creating working conditions that enable public-school teachers to concentrate on their core professional responsibilities (Department of Education, 2024a, 2024b).

The study contributes principally to educational, public health, institutional, and socio-economic sustainability. From an educational sustainability perspective, maintaining effective teachers requires attention not only to instructional competence but also to the conditions under which teaching occurs. Teacher well-being has implications for teaching quality, professional relationships, retention, and student-related outcomes (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Dreer, 2023). Identifying occupational stressors can therefore contribute to efforts to maintain effective and resilient teaching-learning environments. From a public health perspective, occupational stress is relevant because persistent psychological demands may contribute to burnout and other adverse well-being outcomes among teachers (Agyapong et al., 2022). From an institutional perspective, recognizing the effects of workload, working conditions, learner behavior, and organizational support can guide professional-development and workplace-support initiatives. Evidence that structured teacher-focused interventions can improve dimensions of mental health, burnout, and well-being further supports the importance of institutionally responsive approaches (Beames et al., 2023). Socio-economic sustainability is likewise connected to the maintenance of a stable and productive teaching workforce. UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) emphasize that supporting and retaining teachers is essential to resilient education systems and progress toward quality education. In this context, addressing occupational stress among public elementary school teachers contributes not only to individual well-being but also to the longer-term capacity of schools and communities to sustain effective educational services.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. Descriptive research characterizes existing conditions, while correlational research examines relationships among variables without manipulating them or establishing causal effects (Fraenkel et al., 2023). This design was appropriate for determining the prevalence of

occupational stress and its effect on the work performance of public elementary school teachers in Gandara I District and for examining differences and associations involving teachers' profile variables and occupational stress.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Gandara I District, Schools Division of Samar. The district had 204 public elementary school teachers, consisting of 42 males and 162 females, who served 3,299 learners comprising 1,690 males and 1,609 females. Its educational settings included multigrade, complete monograde, far-flung or last-mile, coastal, carline, and integrated schools. These varied geographical and school conditions provided the context for examining occupational stress and work performance among public elementary school teachers.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of 134 public elementary school teachers from 34 schools within Gandara I District. Participants represented different schools across the district, allowing the study to obtain data from teachers working under varied educational and geographical conditions. The respondents were described according to age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, position, and grade level taught.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study utilized simple random sampling, a probability sampling technique in which members of the population have an equal opportunity to be selected (Noor et al., 2022). The sample size was determined using the Raosoft calculator with a 5% margin of error. Proportionate allocation was subsequently applied so that each school's contribution to the sample corresponded to its share of the district's total population of 204 teachers. This procedure resulted in a final sample of 134 public elementary school teachers from 34 schools.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-made survey questionnaire consisting of three parts. The first gathered the respondents' age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, position, and grade level taught. The second assessed the prevalence of occupational stress in terms of poor working environment, work overload, and learners' misbehavior using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5, Strongly Agree, to 1, Strongly Disagree. The third measured the effect of occupational stress on work performance in terms of content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development using the same five-point response scale. The questionnaire underwent face and content validation to evaluate the relevance, clarity, comprehensiveness, and alignment of its items with the constructs being measured. Expert review and pilot testing are important procedures in developing and evaluating researcher-made questionnaires because they help identify unclear, irrelevant, or poorly functioning items before full administration (Kishore et al., 2021; Swan et al., 2023). The thesis adviser and panel members initially reviewed the instrument, followed by five public elementary school heads who conducted face and content validation. Necessary revisions were incorporated based on their feedback. The revised questionnaire was pilot-tested among 30 public elementary school teachers in Gandara II District. Cronbach's alpha was then calculated to assess the internal consistency of the instrument. Internal consistency analysis evaluates the relationships among items intended to measure the same construct, with Cronbach's alpha remaining a commonly applied coefficient for questionnaire-based scales (Swan et al., 2023). The overall instrument obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.845. The occupational stress section obtained $\alpha = 0.910$, with coefficients of 0.908 for poor working condition, 0.802 for work overload, and 0.873 for learners' misbehavior. The work-performance section obtained $\alpha = 0.845$, with coefficients ranging from 0.718 to 0.893 across its dimensions. These coefficients indicated acceptable internal consistency for the study instrument.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher obtained approval from the Schools Division Superintendent of Samar, the district supervisor of Gandara I, and the respective school heads. Selected teachers were provided with information regarding the study's objectives, possible risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw before informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality and protection from harm were observed throughout the research process. The questionnaires were personally distributed and retrieved by the researcher to facilitate communication and clarification when necessary. After collection, the responses were organized, encoded, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22.0.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the demographic and professional profiles of the respondents. Means and standard deviations were used to determine the prevalence of occupational stress in terms of poor working environment, work overload, and learners' misbehavior and to assess its effect on content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development. The Kruskal-Wallis test, Chi-Square test, and

Mann-Whitney test were used to determine significant differences involving occupational stress and its effects on work performance when respondents were grouped according to selected profile variables. These procedures are appropriate for testing differences or associations involving categorical, ordinal, or non-normally distributed data under their respective statistical conditions (Chicco et al., 2025). Tests of between-subjects effects were further utilized to determine which profile variables significantly affected occupational stress. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted at a 5% level of significance and 95% confidence level to assess the distribution of the data and guide the selection of statistical procedures. The overall prevalence of occupational stress showed no significant deviation from normality, while several work-performance dimensions demonstrated non-normal distributions. Because several dimensions did not satisfy normality assumptions, nonparametric procedures were employed where appropriate. Nonparametric tests such as the Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests are suitable when the assumptions required for corresponding parametric procedures are not adequately satisfied (Chicco et al., 2025).

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical safeguards were observed throughout the conduct of the study. Permission to undertake the research was obtained from the appropriate Schools Division, district, and school authorities before data collection. All participating teachers provided informed consent after receiving information regarding the objectives, potential risks and benefits, and voluntary nature of participation. Respondent confidentiality was protected, and participants retained the right to withdraw from the study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Profile of Public Elementary School Teachers

3.1.1 Demographic and Professional Characteristics

Of the 134 public elementary school teachers, 90.3% were aged 25–54 years and 9.7% were aged 55–64 years, with a mean age of 41.43 years. Most respondents were female (82.8%), followed by male teachers (14.9%) and those identifying as LGBTQIA+ (2.2%). More than half were married (52.2%), while 43.3% were single and 2.2% each were widowed or separated. In terms of educational attainment, 52.2% had master’s-level units, 26.9% held master’s degrees, 17.9% held bachelor’s degrees, and 1.5% each held doctorate degrees or doctorate-level units. Most respondents were Teachers I, II, or III (88.8%), while 11.2% were Master Teachers. Primary-grade teachers comprised 61.2% of the respondents, while 38.8% taught intermediate grades. The predominance of female teachers is consistent with the global composition of the primary teaching workforce, where women constitute a substantial majority of teachers (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024). The generally high educational attainment of respondents also reflects continuing professional preparation among teachers, while the concentration in classroom-teaching positions indicates that most participants performed direct instructional responsibilities. Recent evidence emphasizes that professional conditions, competencies, job resources, and opportunities for continuing development contribute to teacher well-being and occupational functioning (Zhou et al., 2024).

3.2 Prevalence of Occupational Stress

3.2.1 Poor Working Environment

Stress associated with the working environment was slightly prevalent overall ($M = 2.59$, $SD = .93$). Respondents generally disagreed that classroom discomfort ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 1.15$), inadequate facilities ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.15$), physical workplace conditions ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.25$), noise ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.13$), and inadequate safety and security ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.07$) were major stressors. However, limited access to basic amenities ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 1.17$) and insufficient infrastructure for a conducive learning environment ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.17$) received relatively higher ratings. These findings indicate that the physical working environment was a less prominent source of occupational stress than workload and learner behavior, although infrastructure and resource limitations remained relevant. Recent research identifies school conditions, resource availability, organizational support, and environmental demands as important contributors to teacher stress and occupational well-being (Carroll et al., 2022; Nwoko et al., 2023). Thus, even when environmental stress is comparatively low, maintaining adequate facilities and institutional resources remains important to supporting teachers.

3.2.2 Work Overload

Work overload was moderately prevalent ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .95$). The strongest concern was balancing teaching, administrative tasks, and extracurricular responsibilities ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.06$), followed by excessive paperwork ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.14$). Teachers also reported stress from administrative tasks in addition to teaching duties ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.10$), burnout from workload demands ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.08$), unrealistic deadlines ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.09$), and the need to work overtime or take work home ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.21$). The findings identify workload as an important occupational stressor. Carroll et al. (2022) reported that excessive workload contributes substantially to teacher stress and burnout, while Wang et al. (2025) found that perceived workload was related to teachers’ work engagement through challenge and hindrance stress. The UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) similarly emphasizes the importance of improving teachers’ working

conditions and addressing excessive workload as part of strengthening and sustaining the profession. The present findings therefore reinforce the importance of managing instructional and noninstructional responsibilities.

3.2.3 Learners' Misbehavior

Learners' misbehavior was the highest-rated occupational stress dimension and was moderately prevalent ($M = 3.09$, $SD = .92$). Teachers particularly reported difficulty maintaining classroom discipline because of frequent misbehavior ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.14$) and identified handling learners with behavioral issues as a significant source of stress ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.06$). Disruptive behavior also distracted teachers from effective instruction ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.12$), interrupted lesson flow ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.15$), and caused exhaustion ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.10$). The findings confirm the importance of learner behavior as a source of teacher stress. Elliott et al. (2024) found that student behavioral functioning was among the strongest predictors of elementary teachers' stress, together with emotional and instrumental support. More recent evidence also suggests that the intensity of students' behavioral problems can be central to teacher stress and burnout (Cappe et al., 2025). The present results therefore indicate that classroom behavior management places substantial emotional and instructional demands on teachers.

3.2.4 Overall Occupational Stress

Overall occupational stress was moderately prevalent ($M = 2.91$, $SD = .81$). Learners' misbehavior had the highest mean ($M = 3.09$, $SD = .92$), followed by work overload ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .95$), while poor working environment was slightly prevalent ($M = 2.59$, $SD = .93$). Thus, workload and learner behavior emerged as the more prominent occupational stressors among the respondents. The overall pattern is consistent with contemporary literature describing teacher stress as a multidimensional occupational concern involving job demands, student-related pressures, workload, environmental conditions, social support, and organizational factors. Agyapong et al. (2022) found substantial evidence of stress and burnout among teachers, while Nwoko et al. (2023) demonstrated that teacher occupational well-being is influenced by interacting individual, interpersonal, and organizational conditions.

3.3 Effect of Occupational Stress on Teachers' Work Performance

3.3.1 Content Knowledge, Pedagogy, and Learning Environment

Occupational stress moderately affected content knowledge and pedagogy ($M = 2.82$, $SD = .92$) and the learning environment ($M = 2.82$, $SD = .91$), making these the most affected work-performance dimensions. Teachers reported that stress affected their ability to apply subject knowledge effectively ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.06$), use diverse teaching strategies ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.08$), and deliver lessons confidently and clearly ($M = 2.83$, $SD = .99$). Stress also affected constructive management of disruptive behavior ($M = 2.87$, $SD = .95$), classroom discipline ($M = 2.84$, $SD = .97$), and maintenance of a positive classroom environment ($M = 2.81$, $SD = .99$). The findings indicate that occupational stress can extend into core instructional and classroom-management responsibilities. In the Philippine context, Obrero and Serviñas (2024) reported a significant relationship between occupational stress and teachers' performance, while Gonzales (2024) documented moderate work-related stress among public elementary school teachers across workload, classroom behavior, resources, and other job demands. International evidence likewise shows that teacher well-being is associated with teaching quality, teacher-student relationships, and other educational outcomes (Dreer, 2023).

3.3.2 Diversity of Learners

Occupational stress had a moderate effect on teachers' ability to address learner diversity ($M = 2.81$, $SD = .89$). Teachers moderately agreed that stress affected their sensitivity to students' diverse backgrounds ($M = 2.82$, $SD = .99$), ability to address varied learning needs ($M = 2.81$, $SD = .97$), and capacity to adapt teaching approaches to different learning styles ($M = 2.81$, $SD = .95$). Individualized support and management of varying learner abilities were similarly affected. These results indicate that occupational pressures may restrict the personal and professional resources teachers can devote to differentiated support. Nwoko et al. (2023) emphasizes that teacher occupational well-being depends on individual, interpersonal, and organizational resources, while Elliott et al. (2024) found relationships among teacher stress, support, student behavioral functioning, and academic functioning. Supporting teacher well-being may therefore help teachers sustain responsiveness to diverse classroom needs.

3.3.3 Curriculum, Planning, Assessment, and Reporting

Curriculum and planning were moderately affected by occupational stress ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .91$). Teachers reported difficulties in planning lessons aligned with curriculum standards ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .97$), organizing curriculum content ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .93$), allocating adequate preparation time ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .98$), and developing creative lesson plans ($M = 2.77$, $SD = .96$). Assessment and reporting were likewise moderately affected ($M = 2.71$, $SD = .86$), particularly accurate assessment of student performance ($M = 2.75$, $SD = .92$), timely feedback ($M = 2.73$, $SD = .95$), maintenance of student records ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .98$), and creation of fair assessments ($M = 2.68$, $SD = .93$). The pattern is consistent with evidence that high workload and hindrance-related stress may reduce teachers' work engagement and consume resources needed for sustained professional tasks (Wang et al., 2025). Carroll et al. (2022) also identifies workload as an important environmental factor in teacher stress and burnout.

Consequently, pressure associated with multiple simultaneous responsibilities may affect planning, assessment, documentation, and other time-intensive instructional functions.

3.3.4 Community Engagement and Professional Development

Community linkages and professional engagement were moderately affected by occupational stress ($M = 2.75$, $SD = .89$). Stress affected support for school-community initiatives ($M = 2.77$, $SD = .96$), collaborative activities ($M = 2.76$, $SD = .95$), communication with parents and guardians ($M = 2.75$, $SD = .93$), and participation in professional networks ($M = 2.75$, $SD = .91$). Personal growth and professional development were also moderately affected ($M = 2.76$, $SD = .90$), particularly enthusiasm for improving teaching skills ($M = 2.80$, $SD = .98$), participation in professional learning ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .92$), and reflective improvement of teaching practices ($M = 2.77$, $SD = .95$). These findings show that stress may also affect activities that sustain collaboration and long-term professional growth. Zhou et al. (2024) identified job competencies, psychological resources, motivation, and other professional factors as important correlates of teacher well-being. The UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) likewise emphasizes continuous professional development and supportive working conditions, while Agyapong et al. (2023) found that structured interventions can help reduce teacher stress and burnout.

3.3.5 Overall Effect on Work Performance

Occupational stress had a moderate overall effect on teachers' work performance ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .82$). Content Knowledge and Pedagogy ($M = 2.82$, $SD = .92$) and Learning Environment ($M = 2.82$, $SD = .91$) were the most affected dimensions, followed by Diversity of Learners ($M = 2.81$, $SD = .89$), Curriculum and Planning ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .91$), Personal Growth and Professional Development ($M = 2.76$, $SD = .90$), Community Linkages and Professional Engagement ($M = 2.75$, $SD = .89$), and Assessment and Reporting ($M = 2.71$, $SD = .86$). The overall result supports recent evidence that occupational well-being is related to teachers' professional functioning and educational outcomes. Dreer (2023) found that teacher well-being is associated with teacher-student relationships, retention, and student outcomes. In the Philippine setting, Obrero and Serviñas (2024) likewise reported a significant relationship between occupational stress and performance. The present results therefore suggest that occupational stress can influence a broad range of professional functions rather than a single component of teaching.

3.4 Differences in Occupational Stress According to Teacher Profile

3.4.1 Differences According to Age

Significant differences in occupational stress were found according to age. Teachers aged 55–64 reported higher stress than those aged 25–54 in poor working environment ($\chi^2 = 4.75$, $df = 1$, $p = .03$), work overload ($\chi^2 = 5.17$, $df = 1$, $p = .02$), and learners' misbehavior ($\chi^2 = 11.19$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). Overall occupational stress also differed significantly ($\chi^2 = 8.56$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$), with older teachers obtaining a higher mean rank of 97.42 compared with 64.29 among younger teachers. The result demonstrates that age was associated with occupational stress in the present context. Recent literature indicates that age and career stage may be related to teacher stress, although the direction of these differences varies across populations and educational settings (Agyapong et al., 2022; Carroll et al., 2022). Recent Philippine research also found significant differences in work-related stress according to age, although the pattern differed from the present sample (Gonzales, 2024). These variations indicate that age-related stress should be interpreted in relation to local workload, responsibilities, resources, and working conditions.

3.4.2 Differences According to Gender, Civil Status, and Educational Attainment

No significant overall differences in occupational stress were found according to gender ($\chi^2 = 2.78$, $df = 2$, $p = .25$), civil status ($\chi^2 = 3.47$, $df = 3$, $p = .32$), or highest educational attainment ($\chi^2 = 4.39$, $df = 4$, $p = .36$). However, civil status significantly differed specifically for poor working environment ($\chi^2 = 8.25$, $df = 3$, $p = .04$), with widowed respondents obtaining the highest mean rank. No significant differences were found across civil-status groups for work overload and learners' misbehavior. Likewise, differences across educational-attainment groups were not statistically significant. The results indicate that these characteristics were generally less influential than age in differentiating occupational stress. Recent reviews show that demographic correlates of teacher stress and burnout are not uniform across studies, with individual characteristics interacting with workload, school context, professional support, and other occupational conditions (Agyapong et al., 2022; Carroll et al., 2022). The lack of consistent differences in the present study therefore suggests that environmental and job-related demands may be more relevant than several demographic characteristics.

3.4.3 Differences According to Position and Grade Level Taught

Position significantly differentiated occupational stress in learners' misbehavior ($\chi^2 = 6.20$, $df = 1$, $p = .01$) and overall stress ($\chi^2 = 4.19$, $df = 1$, $p = .04$). Master Teachers obtained higher mean ranks than Teachers I, II, and III for learners' misbehavior (91.00 versus 64.54) and overall occupational stress (86.83 versus 65.06). Differences in poor working environment and work overload were not statistically significant. Grade level taught did not significantly differentiate poor working environment ($p = .79$), work overload ($p = .21$), learners' misbehavior (p

= .23), or overall occupational stress ($\chi^2 = 0.85$, $df = 1$, $p = .36$), although primary-grade teachers generally recorded slightly higher stress ranks. The significant difference according to position is consistent with recent Philippine evidence. Obrero and Serviñas (2024) identified significant differences in occupational stress according to plantilla position, suggesting that professional role and responsibility can influence stress experiences. Philippine findings regarding grade level are less consistent; Gonzales (2024) reported significant differences in work-related stress according to grade level, whereas the present study did not. This difference indicates that grade-level effects may depend on school context and the specific occupational demands experienced by teachers.

3.5 Differences in the Effect of Occupational Stress on Work Performance According to Teacher Profile

3.5.1 Differences According to Age

Age significantly differentiated the effect of occupational stress across all work-performance domains. Teachers aged 55–64 had higher mean ranks than those aged 25–54 in Content Knowledge and Pedagogy ($\chi^2 = 10.23$, $p < .001$), Learning Environment ($\chi^2 = 14.76$, $p < .001$), Diversity of Learners ($\chi^2 = 11.95$, $p < .001$), Curriculum and Planning ($\chi^2 = 11.87$, $p < .001$), Assessment and Reporting ($\chi^2 = 9.32$, $p < .001$), Community Linkages and Professional Engagement ($\chi^2 = 6.25$, $p = .01$), and Personal Growth and Professional Development ($\chi^2 = 6.60$, $p = .01$). The overall effect was likewise significantly higher among older teachers ($\chi^2 = 10.88$, $p < .001$), whose mean rank was 101.23 compared with 63.88 among younger teachers. The finding indicates that occupational stress had greater perceived effects on the work performance of older respondents in this study. Contemporary evidence shows that age and career stage can be associated with differences in teacher stress and burnout, although these relationships are context-dependent (Agyapong et al., 2022; Carroll et al., 2022). The consistently higher ranks among teachers aged 55–64 across all performance dimensions suggest that age-related differences deserve consideration when designing support mechanisms within Gandara I District.

3.5.2 Differences According to Gender, Civil Status, and Educational Attainment

No significant differences in the effect of occupational stress on work performance were found according to gender across any domain or overall ($\chi^2 = 0.05$, $df = 2$, $p = .98$). Civil status likewise showed no significant differences across individual dimensions or overall work performance ($\chi^2 = 2.61$, $df = 3$, $p = .46$), although widowed respondents generally obtained higher mean ranks. Highest educational attainment also produced no significant differences across the seven performance domains or overall ($\chi^2 = 5.99$, $df = 4$, $p = .20$), despite higher mean ranks among doctorate-degree holders in several dimensions. These findings reinforce the broader observation that demographic characteristics do not consistently explain variations in teacher stress and occupational functioning. Agyapong et al. (2022) and Zhou et al. (2024) demonstrate that teacher well-being is associated with multiple personal and occupational factors rather than demographic characteristics alone. Thus, the absence of significant differences according to gender, civil status, and educational attainment indicates that these characteristics did not substantially differentiate the stress-related performance effects within this sample.

3.5.3 Differences According to Position

Position significantly differentiated the effect of occupational stress on most areas of work performance. Master Teachers reported higher mean ranks than Teachers I, II, and III in Content Knowledge and Pedagogy ($\chi^2 = 6.65$, $p = .01$), Diversity of Learners ($\chi^2 = 4.45$, $p = .03$), Curriculum and Planning ($\chi^2 = 5.47$, $p = .02$), Assessment and Reporting ($\chi^2 = 4.33$, $p = .04$), and Community Linkages and Professional Engagement ($\chi^2 = 8.77$, $p < .001$). Differences in Learning Environment ($\chi^2 = 3.98$, $p = .05$) and Personal Growth and Professional Development ($\chi^2 = 3.80$, $p = .05$) were marginally significant. The overall effect also significantly differed by position ($\chi^2 = 5.54$, $p = .02$), with Master Teachers obtaining a mean rank of 89.73 compared with 64.70 among Teachers I, II, and III. The results indicate that teachers holding higher professional positions experienced stronger stress-related effects on performance. Obrero and Serviñas (2024) similarly identified plantilla position as a significant factor in occupational stress among Philippine public-school teachers. Higher-position teachers may perform broader professional and leadership functions in addition to teaching responsibilities, making position an important consideration in institutional stress-management programs.

3.5.4 Differences According to Grade Level Taught

No statistically significant differences were found between primary and intermediate teachers in Content Knowledge and Pedagogy ($p = .09$), Learning Environment ($p = .10$), Diversity of Learners ($p = .31$), Curriculum and Planning ($p = .33$), Assessment and Reporting ($p = .22$), Community Linkages and Professional Engagement ($p = .17$), or Personal Growth and Professional Development ($p = .34$). The overall effect was also not significantly different ($\chi^2 = 2.46$, $df = 1$, $p = .12$), although primary-grade teachers consistently obtained somewhat higher mean ranks. The results indicate that grade level taught did not significantly differentiate the effect of occupational stress on work performance in this sample. This contrasts with Gonzales (2024), who identified grade-level differences in work-related stress among another group of Philippine public elementary school teachers. The differing findings suggest that the influence of grade assignment may vary according to school context, workload structure, learner characteristics, and other local conditions.

3.6 Profile Variables Affecting Occupational Stress

The tests of between-subjects effects showed that age was the only profile variable that significantly affected occupational stress. Teachers aged 55–64 reported significantly higher occupational stress than those aged 25–54 ($F = 9.754, p = .002$). Gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, position, and grade level taught did not independently produce statistically significant effects in the model. The overall corrected model was significant ($F = 2.050, p = .025$), while the adjusted R^2 of .087 indicated that the included profile variables explained a modest portion of the variation in occupational stress. The significant effect of age supports the need to consider demographic differences without assuming that the same pattern applies across settings. Agyapong et al. (2022) identifies age among the characteristics examined in relation to teacher stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression, while Carroll et al. (2022) demonstrates that stress can differ across career and professional groups. Gonzales (2024) also found significant age-related differences among Philippine public elementary school teachers, further indicating that age can be relevant even though the direction of the relationship varies across samples. Since the present model explained only a limited portion of occupational stress, other organizational and psychosocial factors are also likely relevant. Recent intervention literature supports school-based stress-management, coping, well-being, and organizational-support initiatives for teachers (Agyapong et al., 2023). Professional-development and institutional-support initiatives should therefore be responsive to the specific needs identified among teachers while also addressing workload, classroom demands, and workplace resources.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that occupational stress was moderately prevalent among public elementary school teachers in Gandara I District, particularly due to work overload and learners' misbehavior, while stress associated with the working environment was less prevalent. Occupational stress moderately affected teachers' work performance, including content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, responsiveness to learner diversity, curriculum and planning, assessment and reporting, community and professional engagement, and personal and professional development. Significant differences were observed according to age and position, with older teachers and Master Teachers generally experiencing greater stress and stronger effects on their work performance. Age emerged as the significant profile variable affecting occupational stress, indicating the importance of addressing the specific occupational demands experienced by different groups of teachers.

The district should strengthen support for teacher well-being by improving school facilities and resources, reducing unnecessary workload and administrative demands, strengthening classroom-management support, and promoting appropriate work-life balance and stress-management initiatives. Professional development should address pedagogical skills, differentiated instruction, classroom management, emotional well-being, collaboration, and professional growth, with particular attention to older teachers and Master Teachers. Mentorship, peer support, leadership development, counseling and wellness activities, clear career-development opportunities, and regular assessment of teachers' needs should also be strengthened. The proposed professional development program, Empowering Teachers: Mitigating Stress and Enhancing Well-being, may be implemented and regularly evaluated to promote effective coping, healthier work-life balance, professional effectiveness, and a supportive school environment.

The study was limited to public elementary school teachers in Gandara I District, Schools Division of Samar, during School Year 2024–2025; thus, the findings may not represent teachers in other districts, divisions, or educational levels. It focused specifically on occupational stress associated with poor working environment, work overload, and learners' misbehavior and did not examine other potential sources of stress. The findings were also based on teachers' self-reported perceptions of occupational stress and work performance and did not include the perspectives of school administrators.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The study observed ethical safeguards throughout the research process by obtaining the required permissions before data collection, securing informed consent from participants, maintaining confidentiality, protecting participants from harm, and respecting voluntary participation and the right to withdraw.

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