

Amplifying Social and Emotional Competence (ASEC) of Public-School Teachers as Adaptive Strategies to Work-Related Stress: Basis for Teacher Enhancement Program

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ABSTRACT

Anchored on transactional and person environment-fit theory, this descriptive-correlational study aimed to assess the social and emotional competence and work-related stress of public-school teachers (n=40). This study utilized the adapted questionnaire from the Social and Emotional Competence (SEC) from Long, (2015) and work-related stress from Bowers, (2018). Analyses revealed that Pintuyan National Vocational High School teachers were highly stressed and highly competent as manifested in their level of social and emotional competence with the domains in responsible decision-making, self-regulation, and social/relationships domains. This study concludes that the level of work-related stress among teachers is significantly associated with and related to their social and emotional competence levels. Thus, the work-related stress and enhanced social-emotional competence of teachers influenced their academic lives and dictated their teaching performance and outcomes. Despite the challenges in the pandemic, however, teachers are becoming resilient in dealing with work-related stress and diversely coping individuals as effective managers of stress as public-school teachers. The Department of Education should initiate socio-emotional and academic training that enhances and develops the three domains of SEC among public school teachers. Institutionalizing these trainings and enhancing their SEC competence increases teachers' stress coping mechanism and motivation to pursue professional growth and academic resiliency.

Keywords: COVID-19, work-related stress, social-emotional competence (SEC), public-school teachers, descriptive correlation.

INTRODUCTION

Face-to-face instruction has been phased out at several schools, colleges, and universities. Alternative instructional and assessment strategies have been developed and implemented quickly. The COVID-19 epidemic has allowed us to pave the ground for digital learning to be implemented (Dhawan, 2020). The consequences are far-reaching, and they have had an impact on learning this academic year and will continue to do so in the coming days. According to a study, the COVID-19 epidemic has had an impact on teachers' professional well-being (Alves et al., 2020). Nonetheless, even before the pandemic, teachers were concerned about stress. Despite its reputation as a noble vocation, education has a long history of unrest and crisis (Alves et al., 2020). Understanding stress is crucial since long-term stress is linked to poor mental and physical health consequences (Mariotti, 2015).

For more than a decade, academics have underlined the critical significance of teachers' social-emotional competency in this area (Jennings et al., 2017). However, at the onset of this pandemic, the social and emotional competence of teachers in dealing with work-related stress in the transition period in the new

normal setup of the Department of Education was not explored and studied. Teachers' social-emotional competency is regarded as critical for mastering the social and emotional obstacles that come with their jobs and for developing healthy teacher-student relationships.

Recent studies, however, have found that stress levels are higher than they were before the pandemic (di Fronso et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020). Furthermore, the pandemic is causing a paradigm shift in teaching and learning across the globe (Guillasper et al., 2020), and teachers are facing a wide range of extremely difficult conditions in coping with these changes (Guillasper et al., 2020; Reimer & Schleicher, 2020). Since disease outbreaks can have mental health consequences (AlAteeq et al., 2020). Identifying teacher traits that support them in dealing with their own emotions and developing strong teacher-student relationships—even in difficult social interactions with students—is thus critical for both student development and teacher well-being. As a result, this is critical for both teachers' professional happiness and positive student development. Nonetheless, there is still a need for a study that assesses the profession-specific knowledge and skills that teachers require to meet the social and emotional demands of the classroom to master the social and emotional challenges in the school context.

Therefore, this study explored the perceived work-related stress and social-emotional competence among teachers in Pintuyan National Vocational High School. To the researchers' knowledge, this study is among the first attempts to assess the level of stress and social-emotional competence among professional teachers during the pandemic. The result of this survey could serve as baseline data to investigate if stress level grows over time, in conjunction with the development of stress management interventions and teacher enhancement programs during this pandemic.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the relationship between the level of Social and Emotional Competence of teachers and their work-related stress about their demographic profile, as the basis for a teaching enhancement program among teachers in the District of Pintuyan, Division of Southern Leyte.

Specifically, this study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of the following?

- 1.1 Age

- 1.2 Gender

- 1.3 Years in Service

- 1.4 Marital Status

- 1.5 Employment Status

- 1.6 Residence

2. What is the overall level of Social and Emotional Competence of the respondents in terms of the following?

- 2.1 Responsible Decision-making domain

- 2.2 Self-Regulation domain

2.3 Social/Relationships domain

3. What is the overall level of stress of the respondents in terms of work-related stress?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the overall level of Social and Emotional Competence of the respondents and their level of work-related stress?
5. What are the interventions and enhancement programs needed to address work-related stress among DepEd teachers?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study is anchored on various theories of stress namely, the theory on transactional, and person-environment fit theory. These theories try to explain how the social and emotional competence of teachers is manifested through the interaction of the individual and its environment, as factors affecting work-related stress among teachers.

According to transactional theory, stress is entrenched in an ongoing procedure that involves individuals handling their environments, making appraisals of those encounters, and efforts to cope with the issues that arise (Dillard, 2019). This theory argues that we can either adopt problem-focused or emotion-focused coping styles. Coping strategies can be classed as adaptive if they help us manage our stress responses in the long term. In contrast, maladaptive coping behaviors reduce our experience of stress (the arousal or the symptoms) in the short term, but don't help or exacerbate the problem in the longer term (Frings, 2021) and his study suggested that our experience of stress is ultimately a system of appraisal, response, and adaptation. The transaction relating to stress is between the person and the environment. Depending on the amount of demands that a person is confronted with and the amount of resources that they have to deal with the demands, stress may either be in abundance or avoided entirely (Obbarius, 2021).

Likewise, the Person-Environment Fit theory (Phillips, 2007) points out that stress and strain in the workplace are caused by the interaction of a worker with his or her environment (Daniels et al., 2008), argued that the reason that control and support have a positive impact on reducing strain and enhancing well-being will enable the individual to cope more effectively with stressors, including work demands and that these benefits accumulate over time. In the same line of thought, social support from work colleagues and organizational support for individuals and accommodating their needs also represent major environmental resources, which can reduce stress and burnout (Halbesleben, 2006), as well as enhancing positive well-being (Luszczynska & Cieslak, 2005).

However, poor-work relations as low levels of supportiveness and attention in problem-solving can be potentially stressful when the leadership style is demanding and acknowledgment and praise for effort are valuable for boss subordinate association (Sutherland and Cooper, 2000). In combination with this, point to that in relationship between supervisor and subordinate is harmful, problems of emotional unsteadiness may occur (Cartwright and Cooper 1997). Therefore, along with the work environment, the person role at work has been identified as the major source of stress because of its role conflict, accountability for people and conflict of role border (Dewe & Cooper, 2007).

The conceptual framework of the study is presented to provide a clear flow on the process to be done. The dependent variable of this study is the teachers' work-related stress while the independent variables are the Enhanced Social and Emotional Competence (ESEC) and the demographics of the respondents. The data on what are the level of Enhanced Social and Emotional Competence (ESEC) and the level of stress of teachers can be gathered through an adapted questionnaire. The process is to determine how these Enhanced Social and Emotional Competence (ESEC) and the demographics of the respondents affect their level of work-related stress among DepEd teachers in Pintuyan National Vocational High School, Pintuyan District in the

Division of Southern Leyte (figure 1.)

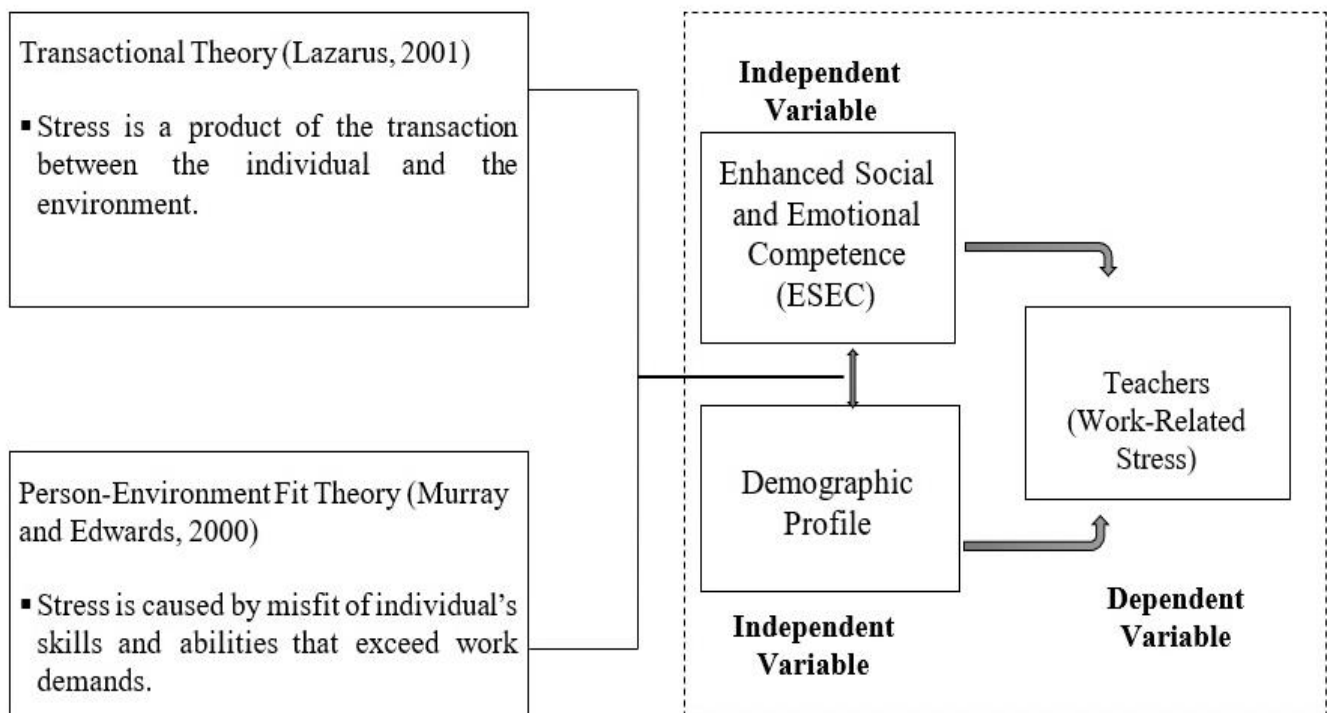


Figure 1. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of the Study

Hypotheses of the Study

At 5% alpha, the following hypotheses will be tested:

Ho:

There is no significant relationship between the overall level of Social and Emotional Competence of the respondents and their level of work-related stress.

Ha:

There is a significant relationship between the overall level of Social and Emotional Competence of the respondents and their level of work-related stress.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a descriptive-correlational research design. The design intends to describe the variables and the existing relationship between and among these variables. It also describes the degree to which two or more quantitative variables are related. The major purpose of this design was to clarify understanding of the phenomenon by identifying the relationship among variables (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 1993). The design defines this study as trying to determine the relationship between the level of Enhanced Social and Emotional Competence (ESEC) and the demographics of the respondents that affect their level of work-related stress among DepEd teachers in Pintuyan National Vocational High School, Pintuyan District in the Division of Southern Leyte

Research Locale

This study was conducted at Pintuyan National Vocational High School, Pintuyan District in the Division of Southern Leyte. This school was selected because it has a larger population of newly hired teachers with less than five years of teaching experience than another secondary school in the Pintuyan District. Pintuyan National Vocational High School is located at Brgy. San Roque, Pintuyan, Southern Leyte is considered one of the biggest technical-vocational High Schools in IAD III in terms of land area and population. It consisted of two tracks in the senior high program namely: Academic track and TVL track which offered 10 technical-vocational offerings. Pintuyan National Vocational High School has a total of 40 teachers and staff, teaching various subjects in the secondary curriculum including senior high school level that offers a track on General Academic Strand (GAS) and Science & Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) with which 23 of them were newly hired teachers both from the junior and senior high schools headed by a two department heads and by Rico L. Amper as the school head.

Research Respondents and Sampling Technique

The target respondents of this study were newly hired teachers who have rendered services for at least a month to 4 years of teaching experience, for mostly they are in a transition and adjustment period. Teachers must be in teaching-related work and about the existing civil service commission and DepEd policies on actual classroom teaching load and working hours prescribed by RA 4670 Magna Carta for Public School Teachers stipulates that public-school teachers shall render at most six (6) hours of actual teaching a day, except when undertaking academic activities that require presence outside the school premises and other functions given. This study utilized non-probability sampling, particularly purposive sampling.

Table 1. Distribution of the Respondents

Pintuyan National Vocational High School	Academic & TVL Teachers	
	Frequency	%
Junior High School Teachers	21	52.50
Senior High School Teachers	19	47.50
TOTAL	40	100

Research Instruments

This study utilized an adapted questionnaire for both the level of Enhanced Social and Emotional Competence (ESEC) from Long (2015) and the level of work-related stress from Bowers, (2018). The research questionnaire consists of three parts. Part I of the questionnaire collects information on the profile of the respondents. This includes the age, gender, years in service, marital status, employment status, present position, and residence.

Part II identifies information related to their level of Enhanced Social and Emotional Competence (ESEC) with which it was divided into three domains. Each domain consists of statements that determine their level of ESEC particularly in the responsible decision-making, self-regulation, and social/relationships domains that affect their work-related stress among DepEd teachers and the respondents will check either highly agree or strongly disagree from their selected experiences.

Part III identifies information related to the level of work-related stress of newly hired teachers during their onset months of teaching and teachers who have 1 to more than 4 years of experience. It also consists of 19 statements that collect information on the common professional stressors at work and respondents will

check either highly agree or strongly disagree from their selected experiences. Pilot testing was conducted to test the consistency of the results and the relationships among variables.

Data Collection Procedures and Ethical Considerations

The adapted questionnaire was personally conducted by the researchers to the respondents after the approval of permission from the school principal. The schedule for the conduct of the study was stipulated in the letter to inform all the concerned authorities regarding when and where the study is conducted. The researchers surveyed the school while following minimum health standards in the month of November 2020 and discussed the significance of the study to the respondents. Respondents were reminded that proceeding with the survey implies consent to participate in the study.

After providing informed consent, participants were allowed to proceed. The said questionnaire was employed during the free time of the respondents. Informed consent was obtained from the respondents after the aims of the study were explained. They were oriented to the study and given direction in answering the questionnaire and asked to answer the adapted questionnaire with utmost honesty then after that the researcher collected the questionnaire. Data confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. The data gathered was carefully recorded and tabulated for analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data gathered were presented in tables and figures which served as the basis for the discussions. In analyzing the data, the statistical technique employed on the descriptive part was on the use of frequency-percentage in determining the profiles of the respondents in terms of demographic variables in the form of the checklist as a data gathering tool while mean was utilized to determine the level of Enhanced Social and Emotional Competence (ESEC) and overall levels of work-related stress among DepEd teachers. The process of getting the significant relationship between Enhanced Social and Emotional Competence (ESEC) and levels of work-related stress lies in the correlation. The data gathered were analyzed and interpreted from various angles and statistical perspectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Teacher Respondents

Table 2 shows the median age of respondents was 32.71 (SD = 9.52) years old. The majority of teachers were female (68.75%), married (56.25%), and having regular permanent (87.50%) positions. More than half (53.12%) of the respondents belong to the teacher 1 position with having 1-3 teaching experience (59.37) and half of them (50%) were residents outside the municipality where the school was located at the time of the survey.

Table 2. Characteristics of Respondents (independent variables)

Variables	M(SD)	f	%
Gender			
Male		10	31.250
Female		22	68.750
Marital Status			
Single		14	43.750
Married		18	56.250

Employment Status			
Provisional		4	12.500
Regular Permanent		28	87.500
Academic Rank/Position			
T-1		17	53.125
T-2		6	18.750
T-3		8	25.000
MT		1	3.125
Teaching Experience			
Less than a Year		4	12.500
1-3 years		19	59.375
4 years above		9	28.125
Residence			
Within the Barangay where the School Located		4	12.500
Within the Municipality where the School Located		12	37.500
Outside the Municipality where the School Located		16	50.000
Age (Median = 29)	32.719 (9.522)		

Social and Emotional Competence (SEC) Level of Teachers

Results of the analysis revealed that teachers in Pintuyan National Vocational High School are highly competent (4.27) in all their level of domains of social-emotional competence – responsible decision-making, self-regulation, and social/relationships. This implies that teachers exercise and exhibit their SEC to some extent even in the new normal setup in the Department of Education and, gradually master their task professionally along with other teachers.

According to Jennings and Greenberg (2009), teachers require social-emotional competency to have good teacher-student relationships and to be happy. Prior studies revealed that teachers with social-emotional competence can overcome the many social and emotional issues they face in the classroom, such as coping with student misbehavior, disengagement, learning difficulties, or poor teacher-student relationships (Elias et al., 1997; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

This reflects that teachers who are better aware of their students' needs and who can facilitate good social interactions in the classroom. In other words, students are reported to have better teacher-student connections, greater awareness of students' comprehension challenges, and fewer classroom disturbances among teachers with higher general pedagogical-psychological expertise (König and Pflanzl, 2016).

In this sense, it is critical to recognize the asymmetric character of teacher-student interactions, which may necessitate profession-specific knowledge and abilities for instructors to thrive (Rafsanjani & Rahmawati, 2019). Empirical evidence shows the linking characteristics of social-emotional competence or theoretically overlapping dimensions like broad pedagogical-psychological understanding to teacher well-being and the quality of teacher-student interactions (Jennings et al., 2017). In addition, teachers can avoid burnout and improve their well-being by developing social and emotional skills. Such a feeling of competence created a space for establishing deep relationships with other teachers at school and promoting a healthy teacher-student relationship in the classroom.

Table 3. Social and Emotional Competence (SEC) Level of Teachers' Respondents

Social-Emotional Competence	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
Responsible Decision-Making Domain	4.334	0.603	Highly Competent
Self-Regulation Domain	4.216	0.617	Highly Competent
Social/Relationships Domain	4.262	0.637	Highly Competent
Overall	4.270	0.619	Highly Competent

Legend: 4.1-5.0 highly competent 3.1 – 4.0 competent 2.1-3.0 moderately competent 1.1-2.0 less competent 0.1- 1.0 not competent

Level of Work-related Stress among PNVHS Teachers

The study revealed that the teachers are highly stressed though motivated and interested in performing school teaching and facilitating-learning-related tasks. A specific result showed that teachers are very stressed to learn and adopt new things they need to learn in the new normal. This is emphasized in the Person-Environment Fit theory (Phillips, 2007) which points out that stress and strain in the workplace are caused by the interaction of a worker with his or her environment. This means that teachers set high goals for themselves for they believe that their choice of profession and vocation prepares them for their personal and professional growth.

This study shows that teachers get more stress in dealing with targets and deadlines in the submission of reports. They also get stressed by the workloads and job demands in this pandemic but have to comply and deal with it. This manifests how motivated and dedicated public school teachers are in their novel profession and in pursuit of facilitating learning. The findings of this study are consistent with that of Liu et al., (2020) who emphasized that there is an increased level of stress compared to levels before the pandemic.

Further study stipulated that the pandemic is also confronting the educational sector worldwide with a paradigm shift in teaching and learning (Guillasper et al., 2021; This is consonance with the transactional theory which emphasizes that depending on the number of demands a person faces and the resources available to meet those demands, stress may be abundant or absent totally (Chang, 2006). Thus, when teachers are highly stressed, they are interested in doing various facilitative and work-related tasks with their co-teachers and enjoy each company as a support system.

Ultimately, when teachers are socially and emotionally competent, they handle work-related stress for fun or take it as a challenge rather than because of external stressors, pressures, or rewards. Moreover, this study supports the claim of Schleicher (2021), who stressed that teachers are facing a wide array of extremely challenging conditions in coping with these changes. Meanwhile, many teachers have been infected, and a few of them succumbed to COVID-19, leaving many teachers very upset and angry (Iftikhar et al., 2023). However, one of the coping mechanisms of the teachers as mentioned by Sarkar et al., (2020), is that teachers are expressing their worries and feelings through social media and blog posts, claiming that teaching has become difficult even for the best of teachers without eye contact and one-on-one engagement.

Table 4. Work-Related Stress Level of Teachers' Respondents

WORK-RELATED STRESS	Mean	Std. Deviation
• Having to take on others people work.	3.844	0.808
• Lack of job satisfaction.	3.313	0.998

• Lack of control over the working day.	3.406	1.012
• Frustration with the working environment.	3.500	1.164
• Having to work long hours.	3.969	0.822
• Feeling undervalued.	3.281	1.276
• Workloads and job demand.	4.000	0.803
• Targets and deadlines.	4.188	0.738
• Type of work people have to do.	3.844	0.808
• Obvious drop in duty performance.	3.500	1.078
• Lack of knowledge.	3.250	1.078
• Inequity in education access in increased.	3.625	0.871
• Changing jobs in school organizations.	3.625	0.871
• Indecision in applying for jobs.	3.250	1.016
• Pressure from school heads.	3.844	0.920
• Limited Work Resources.	3.781	0.870
• Disruptive relationship between schools and communities.	3.406	0.911
• Slow and poor internet connection.	3.750	0.950
• School Head and Teachers' Social and Emotional Competence.	3.688	1.030
AVERAGE	3.634	0.948
OVERALL DESCRIPTION	HIGHLY STRESS	

Legend: 3.26- 4.0 highly stress 2.51-3.25 moderately stress 1.76-2.50 less stress 1.0- 1.75 not stress

Relationship between the Socio-Emotional Competence Level and Work-related Stress Level among Teachers

The finding showed that there is a significant relationship between the socio-emotional competence level and work-related stress level among professional teachers. This implies that their socio-emotional competence of having the feeling of the autonomy of making their own decisions (responsible decision-making domain), of experiencing self-mastery (self-regulation domain), and of feeling academically connected and professionally belonged (social relationships domain) will tell their level of interests and can be manifested in their engagement in doing such academic work-related tasks and performance. Fernet, Guay, and Senecal (2004) found that job control moderated the unhealthy effects of job demands only for employees with high levels of work self-determination. Furthermore, these findings were also supported by the study of Markus & Kitayama, (1991) that teachers tend to have a higher propensity to seek self-development and personal autonomy, given that personal control likely facilitates the ability of employees to take initiative at work.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the level of work-related stress among teachers is significantly associated with and related to their social and emotional competence levels. Thus, the work-related stress and enhanced social-emotional competence of teachers influenced their academic lives and dictated their teaching performance and outcomes. Despite the challenges in the pandemic, however, teachers are becoming resilient in dealing with work-related stress and diversely coping individuals as effective managers of stress as public-school teachers. It is, therefore, recommended that the Department of Education should initiate socio-emotional and academic trainings that enhance and develop the three domains of social and emotional competence among public school teachers. Institutionalizing these trainings and enhancing their social and emotional competence increases teachers' stress coping mechanism and motivation to pursue professional growth and academic resiliency.

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