

## Stress, stressors, and stress management practices among public-school teachers

Jonathan Lapuz Mañas<sup>1</sup>, Roel Sanchez Ang<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Education, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Cabanatuan City, Philippines

<sup>2</sup>College of Arts and Science, Department of Mathematics and Physics, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Cabanatuan City, Philippines

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### ABSTRACT

Stress manifests differently among individuals in various circumstances, stemming from multiple sources. Teachers, in particular, encounter many stressors from personal and work-related domains. This study examines the stress levels of elementary, junior high school, and senior high school public school teachers within Congressional District IV of the Division Office of Nueva Ecija, focusing on everyday life stressors. Additionally, it investigates the stress management practices they employ for coping. The personal metrics of these teachers were analyzed to ascertain their significant relationship with stress levels. Data were randomly collected from 273 respondents through a questionnaire developed by Villamayor. The study unveils that public-school teacher experience slight stress levels and utilize diverse stress management techniques to tackle these stressors. However, the personal metrics of respondents were found to have an insignificant relationship with their stress levels. Nevertheless, the findings of this study pave the way for developing a comprehensive stress management plan to assist public school teachers.

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### Corresponding Author:

Jonathan Lapuz Mañas

College of Education, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

General Tinio Street, Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines

Email: mrjonathanlm@gmail.com

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1930s, research has consistently highlighted stress as a critical issue affecting teachers, with some studies identifying it as the leading health problem within the profession [1]. In recent years, the teaching profession has seen a significant increase in stress levels [2], primarily driven by heightened demands for excellence in education. This push for excellence has ushered in new technologies, methodologies, management styles, and continual innovations across various curricula, all contributing to an increasingly stressful environment for educators [3].

Today, teachers face the challenge of fostering student learning and responsibility for their students' emotional health and physical well-being [4]. This expanding role, coupled with the need to balance personal responsibilities—such as family obligations, religious commitments, and community involvement—intensifies the stress experienced by many teachers. The cumulative effect of these demands has far-reaching implications, negatively impacting teachers' sense of efficacy, job satisfaction, and overall well-being while contributing to burnout, attrition, and decreased student engagement [5]. This literature highlights the complex nature of stress, emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive evaluation of stress levels tailored to appropriate stress management practices and techniques.

However, it is essential to recognize that stress is a subjective experience; what one teacher finds stressful may not be as challenging for another. Ineffective coping strategies can exacerbate stress, leading to

physical, mental, and emotional strain [6]. Therefore, teachers must develop effective coping mechanisms to navigate the complex interplay of professional and personal demands that characterize modern teaching.

Given that teachers experience stress brought about by the circumstances above in their personal and professional lives, is it necessary for schools to regularly look after the welfare of their faculty and protect them from stressful conditions? If yes, what changes or additions should be made to the present conditions of teachers so that they remain effective? The researchers hoped that the answers to these questions would be helpful to teachers. These answers will provide valuable insights to empower teachers to navigate the challenges of their profession, ultimately leading to better outcomes for both teachers and students. This is the rationale behind the conceptualization of this study.

The main concern of this research was to determine the relationship among the personal metrics, the level of stress, and the stress management practices of public-school teachers in Congressional District IV, Division of Nueva Ecija. Specifically, this research attempted to answer the following objectives: i) describe the personal metrics of these public-school teachers, ii) identify their level of stress based on the given stressors, iii) describe the stress management practices these teachers used for them to cope, and iv) discover the relationship between and within their metrics and their level of stress. The findings of this study are hoped to be a baseline for developing a comprehensive stress management plan for public school teachers.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed the mixed-method research design, specifically, the exploratory sequential design. Frequency counts and mean scores were used to analyze the gathered data. Pearson  $r$  was employed to identify the significant relationship between the respondents' profile and stress levels. The study was conducted at the 4th Congressional District, Department of Education, Schools Division of Nueva Ecija. A total of 273 public school teachers participated in this study. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique, and the participants were chosen based on their qualities. These participants were all permanent public school teachers handling elementary, junior high school, and senior high school students. They were asked to give their consent to participate. This study used an adapted questionnaire as its research instrument. The researcher modified and developed the instrument based on the context of the study. The instrument was shown to a licensed psychometrician and experts to establish its validity. To verify the reliability of the instrument, the researcher field-tested the instrument by administering it to participants who were not included in this study. The instrument's internal consistency was determined using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) formula on the data gathered during field testing. The reliability coefficient was computed using SPSS v20. The computed alpha values were described using an acceptability scale formulated by George and Mallery [7].

The survey questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part consisted of an information sheet for the personal metrics of the respondents, such as their age, sex, civil status, family size, monthly income bracket, highest educational attainment, length of teaching experience, number of faculty in the grade level that they handle, frequency of interaction with their immediate supervisor, and frequency of interaction with their co-workers. The second part contained an adapted questionnaire titled "Teachers' Stress Scale in 2022 [8]. In the questionnaire, everyday personal and work-related stressors were categorized. Family relations (10 items), religious obligations (5 items), and community participation (5 items) were under personal-related stressors, while job assignments (5 items), relationships at work (5 items), organizational structure (5 items), career development (5 items), and school situations (5 items) were under work-related stressors. The third part of the survey questionnaire contained questions that solicited answers from the participants on stress management practices they employed to cope. These stress management practices were also divided into two categories: Under personal-related stress management practices were family relations (10 items), religious obligations (5 items), and community participation (5 items), and under work-related stress management practices were job assignments (5 items), relationship at work (5 items), organizational structure (5 items), career development (5 items), and school situations (5 items). This survey questionnaire was used to identify public school teachers' personal metrics, stress levels, and stress management practices in the Congressional District IV, Division of Nueva Ecija.

This survey questionnaire used a 5-point Likert Scale. The stress level from the given personal and work-related stressors used 5 as the highest with a qualitative interpretation of "very high" and 1 as the lowest with a qualitative interpretation of "very low". On the stress management practices potentially employed, it used 5 as the highest with a qualitative understanding of "done every time" and 1 as the lowest with a qualitative interpretation of "never done." On the interpretation on the level of stress, the highest was "extremely stressed" with a score between 4.21-5.00, followed by "very stressed" with a score of between 3.41-4.20, "moderately stressed" with a score of between 2.61-3.40, "slightly stressed" with a score of between 1.81 to 2.60, and the lowest was "not at all stressed" with a score of between 1.00-1.80.

The researcher secured permission to conduct the data gathering from the superintendent of the Department of Education Schools Division of Nueva Ecija and the principals of the participating schools. The researcher solicited the participation of the Public-school teachers as the respondents and facilitated the

questionnaire with them. An informed consent agreement form was prepared and given to each participant to ensure ethical standards in research. The researcher ensured the privacy of the respondents, the appropriate level of confidentiality of research data, and the anonymity of individuals and organizations participating in the research. To provide the respondents ample time to answer the questionnaire carefully, the questionnaires were retrieved the next day.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 presents the respondents' metrics in terms of sex, age, civil status, family size, and monthly income. Regarding the sex of the 273 respondents, 233, or 85.3%, identified as females and 30, or 14.7%, as males. Concerning age distribution, 93, or 33.9%, of the 273 respondents fell within the age bracket of 30 to 40 years old; 69, or 25.3%, were aged between 41 to 50 years old; 57, or 20.9%, were within the age range of 51 to 60 years old; 52 or 19.1% were aged between 19 to 29 years old; and 2 or 0.8% were within the age bracket of 61 to 65.

Regarding civil status, 208, or 76.2%, were married; 57, or 20.9%, were single; 5, or 1.7%, were widowed; 2, or 0.8%, were annulled; and 1, or 0.4%, were separated. They concerned family size; 203, or 74.3%, hailed from a small family, 62, or 22.8%, from a medium-sized family, and 8, or 2.9%, from a large family. In terms of monthly income, 188 or 68.8% of the 273 respondents earned between P21,914.00 to P43,828.00; 48 or 17.5% earned between P10,957.00 to P21,914.00; 17 or 6.2% earned below P10,957.00; 15 or 5.5% earned between P43,828.00 to P76,669.00; 3 or 1.2% earned between P76,669 to P131,484.00; and 2 or 0.8% earned between P131,483.00 to P219,140.00.

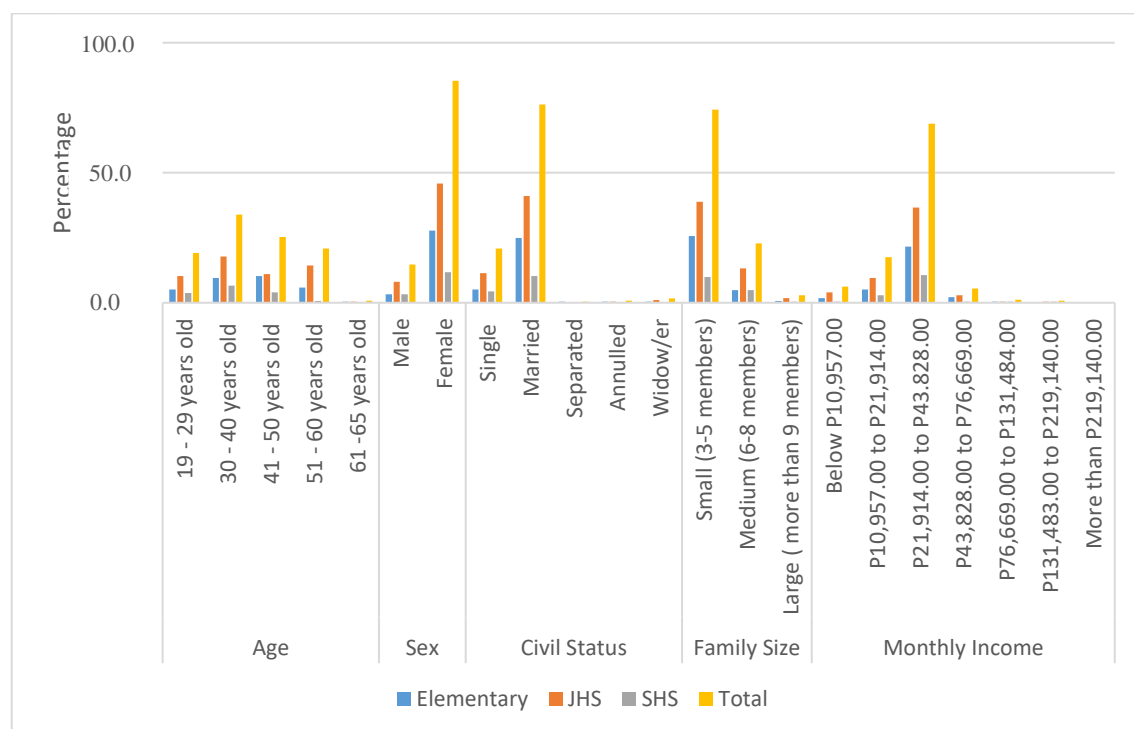


Figure 1. Personal metrics of the respondents as to their age, sex, civil status, family size, and monthly income bracket

Figure 2 presents another set of the respondents' personal metrics in terms of highest educational attainment and length of teaching experience. Regarding the highest educational attainment, 57, or 21%, were secondary education graduates while 38, or 14%, were elementary education graduates; 91, or 33.3%, of the respondents, were earning units in master's while 35, or 12.5% completed their masters; 17 or 6.2% were earning units in doctorate while 12 or 4.5% already graduated, and a combination of 23 or 8.5% had no masters or doctorate units. Regarding the length of teaching experience, 81, or 29.7%, had been in the teaching profession for 1 to 5 years; 59, or 21.3%, had been teaching for 6 to 10 years; 39, or 14.4%, had been in the

profession for 11 to 15 years; 38 or 14% had been teaching for 16 to 20 years; 26 or 9.5% had been in the profession for 21 to 25 years; 16 or 5.9% had been teaching for 26 to 30 years, and only 14 or 5.2% had been in the teaching profession for 31 to 35 years.

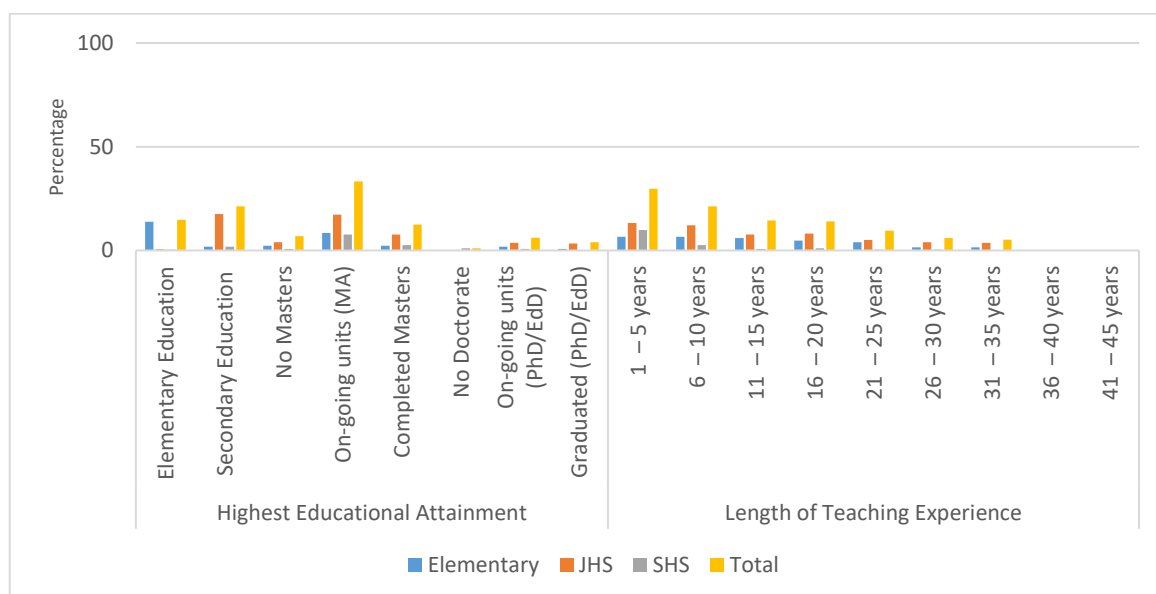


Figure 2. Personal metrics of the respondents as to their highest educational attainment and length of teaching experience

Finally, on the respondents' metrics, Figure 3 presents their work interactions and they were delineated as follows: regarding the number of faculty in their grade level, 99 or 36.2% had 21 and above faculty members; 78 or 28.5% had 6 to 10 faculty members; 49 or 18% had 5 faculty members and below; 33 or 12.1% had 11 to 15 faculty members, and 14 or 5.2% had 16 to 20 faculty members. On the frequency of interaction with immediate supervisors, only 18 or 6.7% of the 273 respondents interacted with their immediate supervisor 5 times a week; 6 or 2.2% interacted 4 times a week; 73 or 26.8% interacted 3 times a week; 100 or 36.5% interacted 2 times a week; 57 or 20.8% interacted once a week, and 19 or 7% of the respondents had no interaction at all with their immediate supervisors. On interaction with co-workers, 28 or 10.2% reported interactions with co-workers 5 times a week; 32 or 11.7% interacted 4 times a week; 82 or 30% interacted 3 times a week; 100 or 36.6% interacted 2 times a week; 29 or 10.7% interacted once a week with their colleagues, and only 2 or 0.8% had no interaction at all with their co-workers.

Table 1 presents the mean scores and the descriptive interpretations of the level of stress of the respondents on both personal-related stressors and work-related stressors, revealing the following findings: The family-related stressors yielded a grand mean of 2.42, indicating an interpretation of SLIGHTLY STRESSED. Similarly, religion-related stressors resulted in a grand mean of 2.25, also interpreted as SLIGHTLY STRESSED. Additionally, community-related stressors exhibited a grand mean of 2.18, once again interpreted as SLIGHTLY STRESSED. These findings align with prior research indicating that teachers often experience stress from personal spheres such as family dynamics, religious commitments, and community pressures [9].

Furthermore, the investigation delved into the level of work-related stress among teacher-respondents, unveiling the following outcomes: Job assignment-related stressors garnered a grand mean of 3.20, indicating an interpretation of MODERATELY STRESSED. Similarly, school situation-related stressors yielded a grand mean of 2.64, interpreted as MODERATELY STRESSED. In addition, organizational structure-related stressors exhibited a grand mean of 2.52, while career development-related stressors resulted in a grand mean of 2.34.

Relationship at work-related stressors garnered a grand mean of 2.22. These findings suggest that teachers encounter various stressors within their professional environments, ranging from the demands of their job assignments to challenges in organizational structures and career advancement opportunities [10]. The cumulative stress level experienced by public school teachers was determined to be 2.47, interpreted as SLIGHTLY STRESSED. These findings underscore the pervasive nature of stress within the teaching profession, highlighting the need for comprehensive support systems and interventions to address the well-being of educators [9].

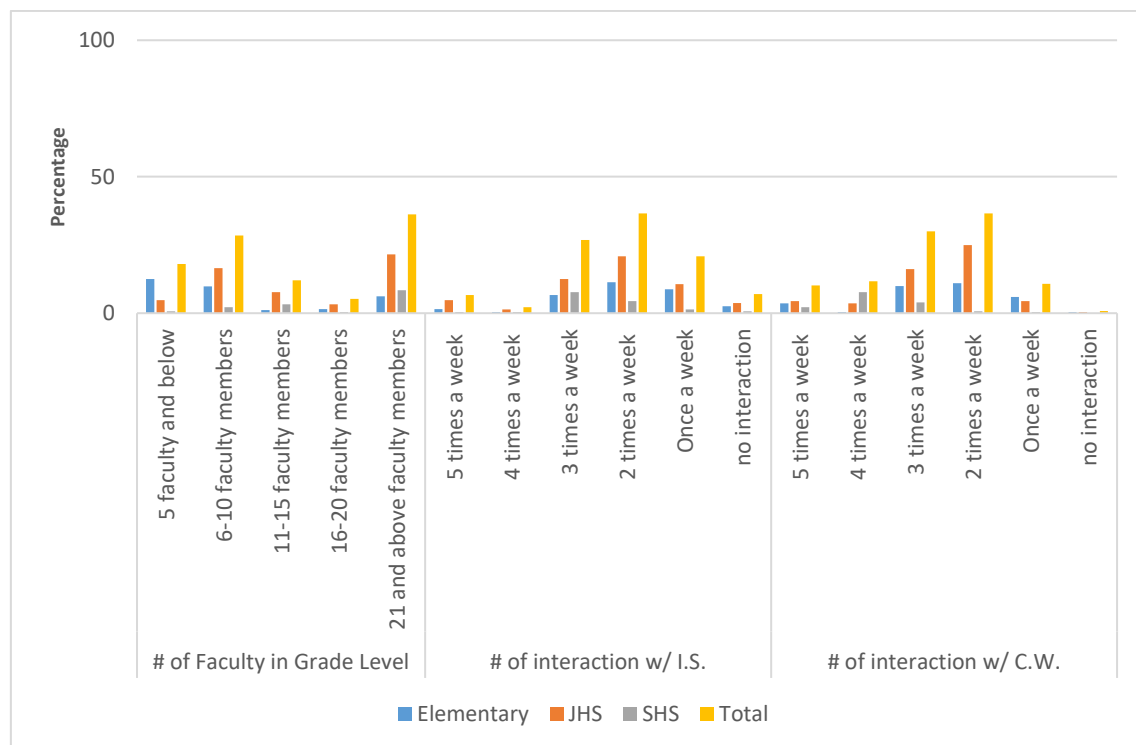


Figure 3. Personal metrics of the respondents on work interactions

Table 1. Mean and interpretation of the two categories of stressors among public-school teachers

Stressors	Mean scores	Descriptive interpretation
Personal-related stressors		
Family relations	2.42	Slightly stressed
Religious obligations	2.25	Slightly stressed
Community participation	2.18	Slightly stressed
Work-related stressors		
Job assignments	3.20	Moderately stressed
Relationship at work	2.22	Slightly stressed
Organizational structure	2.52	Slightly stressed
Career development	2.34	Slightly stressed
School situations	2.64	Moderately stressed
Total	2.47	Slightly stressed

Scores and Interpretation: 4.21-5.00=Extremely Stressed; 3.41-4.20=Very Stressed; 2.61-3.40=Moderately Stressed; 1.81-2.60=Slightly Stressed; 1.00-1.80=Not at all Stressed

Table 2 presents the mean scores and the interpretation of the analysis of stress management practices among respondents and the strategies they employed to cope with personal and work-related stressors. The results of the respondents' personal stress management practices garnered a grand mean of 3.95, indicating that family-related stress management practices were done almost every time. This aligns with existing literature emphasizing the pivotal role of family support in buffering against occupational stress and promoting teacher resilience [11].

Similarly, while religion-related stress management practices garnered a slightly lower grand mean of 3.71, respondents still engaged in these practices on an occasional basis, suggesting a recognition of the potential benefits of spiritual and faith-based coping mechanisms in navigating stressors [12]. Furthermore, community-related stress management practices exhibited a commendable grand mean of 3.70, indicating that respondents consistently turned to their social networks and community resources to alleviate stressors, underscoring the importance of social support in fostering teacher well-being [13]. Regarding work-related stress management practices, respondents displayed a proactive approach to addressing job-related challenges. Job assignment-related practices scored notably high, with a grand mean of 4.15, indicating that public school teachers find ways to make their jobs easier.

This reflects a recognition of the significance of task management and organization in mitigating job-related stressors [14]. Moreover, the emphasis on relationships in work-related practices, as evidenced in a grand mean of 4.23, underscores the pivotal role of positive workplace relationships and interpersonal support systems in fostering teacher well-being and job satisfaction [15]. Similarly, the consistent implementation of organizational structure-related practices, with a grand mean of 3.90, suggests recognizing the importance of clear communication channels and supportive administrative frameworks in navigating workplace challenges [16].

Furthermore, the significant emphasis on career development-related practices, indicated by a grand mean of 3.76, underscores the value placed on professional growth and self-development as mechanisms for coping with job-related stressors and enhancing job satisfaction [17]. Lastly, prioritizing school situation-related practices, with a grand mean of 4.08, highlights participants' proactive measures to address stressors inherent within the educational environment, such as curriculum demands, student behavior management, and classroom dynamics [18]. Overall, these findings underscore the multifaceted nature of stress management among educators and highlight the importance of implementing diverse coping strategies to navigate the complex challenges inherent within the teaching profession effectively. Moreover, they emphasize the need for targeted interventions and supportive organizational policies to foster a conducive work environment that promotes teacher well-being and job satisfaction.

Table 2. Mean and interpretation of the two categories of the stress management practices employed by the public-school teachers

Stress management practices	Mean scores	Descriptive interpretation
Personal-related practices		
Family relations	3.95	Done almost every time
Religious obligations	3.71	Done almost every time
Community participation	3.70	Done almost every time
Work-related practices		
Job assignments	4.15	Done almost every time
Relationships at work	4.23	Done every time
Organizational structure	3.90	Done almost every time
Career development	3.76	Done almost every time
School situations	4.08	Done almost every time
Scores and Interpretation: 4.21-5.00=Done Every time; 3.41-4.20=Done Almost Every time; 2.61-3.40=Done Occasionally; 1.81-2.60=Done Almost Never; 1.00-1.80=Never Done		

Table 3 presents the correlation between personal metrics and public-school teachers' stress levels. On their metrics, both the elementary and junior high school teacher respondents exhibited a VERY SMALL CORRELATION with their stress levels. This finding resonates with previous research highlighting the nuanced relationship between individual characteristics and stress experiences among teachers [19]. Specifically, age (-0.68) and sex (-0.103) demonstrated a VERY SMALL NEGATIVE CORRELATION with teacher-respondents' stress levels. These results suggest that younger age and male gender may be associated with slightly lower stress levels among junior high school teachers, although the magnitude of these correlations is minimal.

Furthermore, the highest educational attainment (-0.017), length of teaching experience (-0.111), and the number of faculty in their grade level (-0.061) were also found to have VERY SMALL NEGATIVE CORRELATIONS with stress levels. These findings are consistent with previous studies suggesting that higher levels of education and longer teaching experience may confer some resilience against stress in educational settings [20], [21]. Conversely, the remaining personal metrics displayed VERY SMALL POSITIVE CORRELATIONS with stress levels among junior high school teacher participants. Civil status (0.011), family size (0.043), highest educational attainment (0.033), frequency of interaction with immediate supervisors (0.049), and frequency of interaction with co-teachers (0.002) all showed minimal associations with elevated stress levels. These results underscore the complex interplay between individual characteristics and stress experiences in the teaching profession, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to support teacher well-being [22], [23].

Similarly, among senior high school teacher participants, 9 out of 10 personal metrics exhibited VERY SMALL CORRELATIONS with stress levels. Age (-0.039), sex (-0.198), civil status (-0.153), and frequency of interaction with immediate supervisors (-0.078) demonstrated very small negative correlations with stress levels, suggesting that factors such as older age, female gender, single status, and less frequent interaction with supervisors may be associated with slightly higher stress levels among senior high school teachers [24], [25]. Conversely, personal metrics such as family size (0.086), monthly income (0.025), highest educational attainment (0.008), length of teaching experience (0.073), and the number of faculty in the grade level (0.141) exhibited very small positive correlations with stress levels. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of stress experiences among senior high school teachers, influenced by personal and contextual factors [26], [27].

Of particular interest is the MODERATELY SMALL NEGATIVE CORRELATION observed between senior high school teacher participants' frequency of interaction with co-teachers and stress levels (correlation of 0.274). This suggests that greater engagement with colleagues may be associated with slightly lower stress levels among senior high school teachers, highlighting the potential protective role of social support networks in mitigating occupational stress [28], [29]. These findings underscore the importance of considering individual characteristics and interpersonal dynamics in addressing teacher stress and promoting well-being within educational settings.

Examining the various personal metrics revealed a potential correlation with the stress level experienced by public school teachers. Notably, among the examined personal metrics, the frequency of interaction with co-workers exhibited an R-value of 0.274. This coefficient, indicative of a moderately small negative correlation, fell short of statistical significance, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis, positing a significant relationship between these personal metrics and the level of stress experienced by teachers.

This finding aligns with prior research suggesting that while interpersonal relationships within the workplace may influence overall job satisfaction and well-being, their direct impact on stress levels can be nuanced and multifaceted [30], [31]. Despite the lack of statistical significance in this correlation, it underscores the importance of further exploration into the intricate dynamics of social interactions among educators and their potential implications for stress management and workplace dynamics. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that other personal metrics demonstrated only a very small correlation with the stress level among public school teachers. While these correlations may not have reached statistical significance, they nonetheless provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between individual characteristics and stress experiences within the teaching profession.

Table 3. Correlation between the personal metrics and the level of stress of public-school teachers

Personal metrics of the respondents	Pearson-r value (Personal and work-related stressors)		
	Elementary teachers	Junior high school teachers	Senior high school teachers
Age	-0.089	-0.068	-0.039
Sex	-0.188	-0.103	-0.198
Civil status	0.050	0.011	-0.153
Family size	-0.001	0.043	0.086
Monthly income	0.036	-0.017	0.025
Educational attainment	0.128	0.033	0.008
Length of teaching experience	-0.047	-0.111	0.073
Number of faculty in grade level	0.033	-0.061	0.141
Frequency of interaction with immediate supervisor	-0.147	0.049	-0.078
Frequency of interaction with co-teachers	0.018	0.002	0.274

Legend: \* Significant

These findings underscore the need for continued research efforts to eliminate some specific factors contributing to teacher stress and well-being. By gaining a deeper understanding of the relationships between personal metrics and stress levels, educators and policymakers can develop targeted interventions and support systems to promote teacher resilience and foster a positive work environment [31], [32]. Moreover, the absence of significant correlations highlights the nature of teacher stress, emphasizing the importance of adopting a holistic approach to stress management that considers various personal, professional, and contextual factors. Through comprehensive strategies aimed at addressing the diverse needs of educators, schools can cultivate a supportive and conducive work environment conducive to teacher well-being and ultimately enhance student outcomes [33], [34].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The faculty members of the participating public schools in the Congressional District IV of the Schools Division of Nueva Ecija were predominantly females within the ideal age bracket, mostly married, hailing from small families, earning a lower-middle monthly income bracket, concurrently pursuing graduate studies, relatively new to the teaching profession, part of grade levels with an adequate number of faculty members, engaging with their immediate supervisors twice a week, and interacting with their co-workers twice a week. The level of stress experienced by public school teachers concerning personal-related stressors was assessed as LOW LEVEL, interpreted as SLIGHTLY STRESSED. Similarly, regarding work-related stressors, public school teachers were rated SLIGHTLY STRESSED. The stress management practices adopted by participating public school teachers were predominantly characterized by practices interpreted as DONE

ALMOST EVERY TIME. Notably, relationship-at-work stress management practices were marked as DONE EVERY TIME, while religion-related stress management practices were marked as DONE ALMOST EVERY TIME. These findings highlight the diversity in stress management practices employed by public school teachers to cope with their respective stressors. While the personal metrics of public school teachers showed no significant relationship with their stress levels, a slight association was observed between the frequency of their interaction with co-workers and their stress levels. A comprehensive stress management plan has been developed to address public school teachers' stressors. This plan includes situational stress indicators and recommended behavioral techniques or strategies to address them. It aims to assist both VERY STRESSED and MODERATELY STRESSED public school teachers in the Congressional District IV of Nueva Ecija. Comprehensive stress management programs that include mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral techniques, and relaxation exercises have significantly reduced stress and improved teachers' well-being. Moreover, the content of this stress management plan would be equivalent to studies that showed that very stressed teachers need to be provided with access to professional counseling services and be able to have an enhanced work-life balance with flexible work arrangements while moderately stressed teachers have to be able to promote among themselves resilience and coping skills through professional development enhance supportive school culture and organizational support and facilitate peer support and collaborative practices.




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## BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS



**Jonathan Lapuz Mañas**    is an Internationally Coded Trainer on International English Language Proficiency and Qualification Assessment, recognized by the Leadership and Governance International Standards (LGIS) Qualification Assessment Authority. He holds a Master TESOL Certificate for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, awarded by the Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of the Philippines (TESLA) and the Department of Tourism (DOT). He is a licensed professional teacher with almost ten years of experience in the teaching profession. He is an Associate Professor at the College of Education of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, San Isidro Campus. He can be contacted at email: mrjonathanlm@gmail.com.



**Roel Sanchez Ang**    is a committed learning advocate who enjoys discovering new contexts in pedagogy to inspire fellow educators to provide education in a broader spectrum of application to their students; he is a leader who engages his faculty members to be empowered members of the academe. Career milestones include writing and editing many textbooks in sciences and mathematics, engaging in pedagogical research to contribute to science pedagogy, and serving as a trainer and resource speaker to professionals pursuing educational excellence. Has an Executive Doctorate in Leadership, Education Track, from the University of Makati; has earned a Master's Degree in Teaching, Major in Physics from the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology; possesses a baccalaureate degree in Physics from De La Salle University. Recipient of the Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature, currently the Chair of the Mathematics and Sciences Department of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, and an Accreditor of the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines, Inc. He can be contacted at email: roelbutchang@gmail.com.