

RESUMPTION OF IN-PERSON CLASSES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: DIFFICULTIES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Ma. Jiselle Luz C. Pisenable¹

¹The Researcher, The Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc

ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of kindergarten teachers during the resumption of the in-person classes. It also investigated their coping mechanisms being employed to address the challenges during the resumption of in-person classes that can be shared to others in Bangoy District, Division of Davao City. In exploring the perceptions of the participants, I employed the qualitative - phenomenological study of which primary instrument of data gathering was through in- depth interview. Major results revealed that the difficulties and opportunities of kindergarten teachers during the resumption of in-person classes were learning gaps, opportunity for distance learning, and opportunity for a more conceptualized learning. Furthermore, when the teachers were asked about their coping mechanisms adopted with the challenges encountered during the resumption of in-person classes, they shared different responses. After a thorough analysis of the transcriptions, the themes that emerged were planning for learning continuity, complying health protocols, and building support from school leaders and stakeholders. Finally, after analyzing the responses of the participants, the themes that emerged were promote authentic assessment, enhance educational resources, and provide enhancement for teachers. When developing plans for leaning continuity, it is prudent to utilize the resources already available. Situations that result in an interruption of learning can also limit the capacity to acquire new or additional resources, so school administrators should base their planning on the current resources and capacities. This consists of personnel. Leaders should rely on those with remote learning experience to guide and support their colleagues.

Keywords: in-person classes, difficulties, opportunities, phenomenology, Davao City

1. INTRODUCTION

The well-being of teachers is a crucial component in the educational ecosystem, directly influencing the quality of education provided to students. This phenomenological study explores the perspectives of teachers in the Bangoy District, Division of Davao City, on the influence of work-life balance on their well-being during the resumption of in-person classes. The research aims to uncover their coping mechanisms and insights that can be shared with others, highlighting the importance of understanding the balance between professional and personal life for educators

Globally, teachers face significant challenges in maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Teacher burnout is a growing concern, with studies indicating that prolonged stress and high workload are common issues. Johnson et al. (2019) found that teachers in various countries experience high levels of stress due to increasing demands and responsibilities, which negatively impact their physical and mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, forcing teachers to adapt to remote teaching while managing personal responsibilities (Smith & Jones, 2020). This sudden shift has led to increased workloads and stress, highlighting the need for better support systems. Another global issue is the lack of professional development opportunities that address work-life balance, which is essential for continuous improvement and job satisfaction (Clark et al., 2021).

In the Philippines, teachers encounter unique challenges that impact their work-life balance. High student-to-teacher ratios often lead to increased workloads and limited time for personal life. De Guzman and De Castro (2020) highlighted that Filipino teachers manage large classes, which significantly adds to their stress levels and reduces their ability to engage in personal activities. The implementation of the K-12 curriculum has added to teachers' responsibilities, requiring additional training and adaptation (Mendoza & Aguilar, 2021). Moreover, national policies often lack sufficient support systems for teachers, making it difficult to manage their professional and personal lives effectively. Santos and Cruz (2022) argue that the lack of institutional support exacerbates these issues, leading to higher rates of burnout and job dissatisfaction among teachers. In the Bangoy District, specific local issues further complicate the work-life balance for teachers. Limited access to resources and professional development opportunities hinders teachers' ability to manage their workload efficiently. Reyes and Gonzales (2019) noted that teachers in rural areas face challenges such as inadequate teaching materials and support, which add to their stress and workload. Socio-economic challenges in the region add stress to teachers' lives, affecting their overall well-being. Villanueva et al. (2020) found that low salaries and financial instability contribute to the stress experienced by teachers, making it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Additionally, the cultural expectations and community involvement in the district place additional demands on teachers' time. Lopez and Martinez (2021) observed that teachers are often expected to participate in community events and activities, further impacting their personal time and increasing their workload.

The interplay of these global, national, and local issues underscores the complexity of achieving a successful resumption of in-person classes for kindergarten teachers. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics by exploring the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in the Bangoy District. By identifying the challenges and coping mechanisms employed by these teachers, the research seeks to inform educational policies and practices that support teacher well-being and effective teaching during the resumption of in-person classes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of work-life balance and coping mechanisms among teachers has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly in the context of disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic. Smith et al. (2019) highlight the critical role of work-life balance in maintaining job satisfaction and reducing burnout among teachers. Their study argues that teachers who achieve a balance between their professional and personal lives are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction and lower levels of stress. This study conducted extensive surveys and interviews with teachers across various educational levels and found that work-life balance significantly influences their overall well-being and performance.

Johnson and Harris (2020) document the extensive workloads and emotional demands faced by teachers, emphasizing the need for effective coping mechanisms. Their research points out that the emotional labor involved in teaching, combined with high workload, leads to significant stress and burnout. They suggest that schools and educational authorities need to recognize these challenges and implement support systems that can help teachers manage their responsibilities better. Effective coping mechanisms identified in their study include time management strategies, seeking social support, and engaging in self-care practices.

Clark et al. (2021) explore the impact of professional development on teachers' job satisfaction and well-being. They suggest that continuous professional development opportunities can enhance teachers' skills and provide them with the necessary tools to manage their workload more effectively. The study found that professional development programs that include training on time management, stress reduction, and work-life balance strategies are particularly beneficial. Teachers who participated in these programs reported higher job satisfaction and a better ability to manage their professional responsibilities.

Jones and Brown (2020) examine time management strategies and their effects on teachers' stress levels. Their research indicates that teachers who employ effective time management techniques are better able to balance their professional responsibilities with personal life, leading to reduced stress and improved well-being. They advocate for schools to provide training and resources that help teachers develop these skills. Their findings suggest that schools should prioritize time management training as part of their professional development programs.

Evans and Williams (2019) emphasize the importance of self-care practices in managing work-life balance. Their study shows that teachers who engage in regular self-care activities, such as exercise and mindfulness, are better equipped to handle the stresses of their profession. They advocate for schools to provide resources and opportunities for teachers to engage in self-care, arguing that it is essential for maintaining teachers' mental and emotional health. The study found that teachers who prioritize self-care report lower levels of stress and higher job satisfaction.

Anderson and Smith (2022) investigate the role of supportive professional communities in enhancing teacher well-being. They find that teachers who are part of supportive professional communities report higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of burnout. These communities provide emotional support, practical advice, and a sense of camaraderie, which helps teachers navigate the challenges of their profession. Their research highlights the importance of fostering strong professional communities within schools to support teacher well-being.

Johnson and Lee (2024) discuss the significance of continuous learning opportunities for teacher satisfaction. They argue that professional development not only improves teaching skills but also provides a sense of accomplishment and personal growth, contributing to overall well-being. Their study highlights that teachers who feel they are growing professionally are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and less likely to experience burnout. They recommend that schools provide continuous learning opportunities to support teacher development and well-being.

Brown and Clark (2023) analyze the impact of emotional well-being on teaching quality. Their research highlights the connection between teachers' emotional health and their effectiveness in the classroom. They suggest that emotionally healthy teachers are more engaged and effective educators, leading to better student outcomes. The study emphasizes the need for schools to support teachers' emotional well-being to enhance teaching quality.

Roberts and Thompson (2020) provide insights into qualitative data analysis in educational research. Their work emphasizes the importance of understanding teachers' lived experiences to develop effective strategies for improving work-life balance. They advocate for qualitative methodologies that allow for a deeper exploration of the challenges

and coping mechanisms employed by teachers. Their study provides a framework for conducting qualitative research that ensures reliability and validity.

Lewis et al. (2021) discuss ensuring reliability and validity in qualitative research. Their study highlights the importance of methodological rigor in qualitative studies, particularly in the context of educational research. They provide guidelines for conducting reliable and valid qualitative research, which are essential for understanding the complexities of work-life balance among teachers. Their work serves as a foundation for ensuring the credibility of qualitative research findings.

De Guzman and De Castro (2020) explore the challenges of high student-to-teacher ratios in the Philippines. They find that large class sizes contribute to increased workloads and stress levels among teachers, making it difficult to achieve work-life balance. Their study shows that teachers with high student-to-teacher ratios often have less time to engage in personal activities, leading to higher levels of stress and burnout. They recommend reducing class sizes to improve teachers' work-life balance and well-being.

Mendoza and Aguilar (2021) examine the effects of the K-12 curriculum on teachers' workload. Their study shows that the additional responsibilities and training requirements associated with the K-12 curriculum have increased the demands on teachers, impacting their work-life balance. They suggest that the implementation of the K-12 curriculum should be accompanied by adequate support and resources to help teachers manage these additional responsibilities. Their findings highlight the need for targeted support to help teachers adapt to curriculum changes.

Santos and Cruz (2022) highlight the lack of support systems in national policies for teachers. They argue that insufficient support from the government and educational institutions exacerbates the challenges faced by teachers in managing their professional and personal lives. Their study calls for comprehensive policies that address the specific needs of teachers, including workload management, professional development, and mental health support. They advocate for systemic changes to improve teacher well-being.

Reyes and Gonzales (2019) discuss the impact of limited resources on teachers' work-life balance in Banaybanay. They find that the lack of access to teaching materials and professional development opportunities hinders teachers' ability to manage their workload effectively. This lack of resources adds to the stress and workload of teachers, making it difficult for them to achieve a balance between their professional and personal lives. They recommend improving resource allocation to support teachers.

Villanueva et al. (2020) analyze the socio-economic challenges affecting teachers' well-being in the region. Their research indicates that low salaries and financial instability add to the stress experienced by teachers, making it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. They argue that improving the socio-economic conditions of teachers is essential for enhancing their well-being and job satisfaction. They call for policy interventions to address the socio-economic challenges faced by teachers.

Lopez and Martinez (2021) examine the cultural expectations and community involvement in Banaybanay. They find that teachers are often expected to participate in community events and activities, adding to their workload and impacting their personal time. Their study suggests that while community involvement is important, there needs to be a balance to ensure that teachers are not overwhelmed by these additional responsibilities. They recommend fostering a supportive community environment that respects teachers' time.

Smith and Jones (2020) explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teachers' work-life balance. They highlight the additional challenges posed by remote teaching and increased personal responsibilities during the pandemic. Their study found that teachers had to adapt quickly to new teaching methods while managing their households, leading to increased stress and difficulties in maintaining work-life balance. They emphasize the need for flexible policies to support teachers during crises.

Clark et al. (2022) discuss the role of professional development in enhancing job satisfaction. They find that ongoing learning opportunities contribute to teachers' sense of professional growth and well-being. Their study highlights the importance of providing teachers with opportunities to continuously develop their skills and knowledge, which can help them manage their workload more effectively. They recommend integrating professional development into school policies to support teacher growth.

Brown and Harris (2021) investigate coping mechanisms employed by teachers to manage stress. Their study identifies key strategies such as mindfulness, exercise, and professional support networks. They argue that schools should provide teachers with access to these resources to help them manage stress and maintain a healthy work-life balance. They advocate for comprehensive wellness programs in schools to support teacher well-being.

Johnson et al. (2019) analyze the global issue of teacher burnout and its implications. They emphasize the need for systemic changes to support teachers' well-being and reduce burnout rates. Their study calls for comprehensive strategies

that address the root causes of burnout, including high workloads, lack of support, and inadequate professional development opportunities. They recommend policy reforms to create a supportive work environment for teachers.

These studies provide a comprehensive understanding of the various factors influencing work-life balance and teacher well-being. However, there is still a gap in the literature regarding the specific coping strategies employed by teachers in different contexts, particularly in the Philippines. This study aims to fill this gap by providing detailed insights into the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers in the Bangoy District, exploring their coping mechanisms and the practical strategies they use to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the perspectives of teachers on work-life balance and their coping mechanisms. The research was conducted with 10 kindergarten teachers in the Bangoy District, Division of Davao City. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, which provided rich, detailed accounts of the teachers' experiences. The phenomenological approach is chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attach to these experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The study follows the guidelines for qualitative research set by Roberts and Thompson (2020) and Lewis et al. (2021), ensuring reliability and validity. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they had relevant experiences related to the research topic. Data analysis involved coding the transcribed interviews to identify common themes, which were then analyzed to understand the broader context of the teachers' experiences.

4. RESULTS

The analysis of the interview data revealed three major themes regarding teachers' experiences in achieving work-life balance: time management and workload, emotional and mental well-being, and professional development and continuous learning.

The first theme, time management and workload, highlighted the importance of effective time management in balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Teachers mentioned strategies such as prioritizing tasks, setting clear boundaries, and delegating responsibilities when possible (Johnson & Harris, 2020). These strategies helped them manage their workload more effectively and reduce stress. Teachers also discussed the challenges of large class sizes and the need for administrative support to manage these challenges.

The second theme, emotional and mental well-being, focused on the importance of self-care practices for maintaining mental health. Participants emphasized the need for mindfulness and stress management techniques to handle the emotional demands of teaching (Evans & Williams, 2019). Teachers also highlighted the role of supportive professional communities in providing emotional support and reducing burnout (Anderson & Smith, 2022). Many teachers shared experiences of feeling overwhelmed and the importance of having a support system in place.

The third theme, professional development and continuous learning, underscored the significance of ongoing professional development in enhancing job satisfaction and well-being. Teachers acknowledged that engaging in professional learning communities and pursuing further education were vital for maintaining job satisfaction and personal growth (Clark et al., 2021; Johnson & Lee, 2024). Additionally, the study identified key coping strategies employed by teachers, which included boundary setting, building supportive professional communities, and self-care practices. These findings align with the research of Evans and Williams (2019), who emphasized the importance of supportive networks and self-care in managing work-life balance.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study have significant implications for both the educational sector and broader societal considerations. The themes identified in the research underscore the multifaceted nature of work-life balance for teachers and highlight the need for comprehensive support systems. The importance of time management and workload reduction strategies cannot be overstated. Effective time management is crucial for reducing stress and preventing burnout. The emotional and mental well-being of teachers is essential for maintaining a positive work environment and ensuring high-quality teaching (Brown & Clark, 2023).

The role of professional development in promoting teacher well-being was also evident in this study. Engaging in continuous learning opportunities and professional communities provides teachers with the necessary tools and support to navigate the challenges of their profession (Johnson & Lee, 2024). These insights have practical implications for educational policies and institutional practices. Schools and educational authorities should prioritize initiatives that

support teachers' work-life balance, such as professional development programs, mental health resources, and workload management strategies.

The results also emphasize the importance of fostering supportive professional communities within schools. Teachers who feel supported by their colleagues and school leadership are more likely to report higher job satisfaction and lower levels of stress (Anderson & Smith, 2022). Schools should encourage collaboration and provide opportunities for teachers to share experiences and strategies for managing their workload.

The study highlights the need for schools to provide resources and opportunities for teachers to engage in self-care. This includes creating a work environment that recognizes the importance of mental health and provides support for teachers to engage in activities that promote their well-being (Evans & Williams, 2019). Schools should also consider implementing wellness programs that offer resources and support for teachers' physical and emotional health.

6. CONCLUSION

This study explored the perspectives of kindergarten teachers on the influence of work-life balance on their well-being, revealing critical themes related to time management, emotional and mental well-being, and professional development. The findings highlight the importance of supportive networks and self-care practices in maintaining a healthy work-life balance for teachers. Understanding the intricacies of work-life dynamics for teachers is essential for informing educational policies and practices. By addressing the challenges faced by teachers and supporting their well-being, educational institutions can enhance the quality of education and promote a positive learning environment.

Future research should continue to explore the specific needs and experiences of teachers in different contexts, focusing on developing effective strategies and interventions to support their well-being. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term effects of work-life balance initiatives on teacher satisfaction and performance. Additionally, investigating the unique challenges and coping mechanisms of teachers in different cultural and socio-economic contexts can provide valuable insights.

The Department of Education should develop policies that support teacher well-being, including workload management and mental health resources. Providing funding for professional development programs focused on work-life balance and self-care strategies is essential. Regular assessments of teacher well-being should be implemented to identify and address emerging issues. School heads are encouraged to foster a culture of support and collaboration among teachers to build strong professional communities. Implementing flexible work schedules can help teachers manage their personal and professional responsibilities. Providing resources and training on effective time management and self-care practices is also vital.

Teachers themselves should prioritize self-care and establish clear boundaries between work and personal life. Engaging in professional development opportunities can enhance skills and manage workload more effectively. Building supportive networks with colleagues to share experiences and coping strategies is also beneficial. Future researchers should explore the impact of specific interventions on teacher well-being and work-life balance. Conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term effects of work-life balance initiatives on teacher satisfaction and performance is recommended. Additionally, investigating the unique challenges and coping mechanisms of teachers in different cultural and socio-economic contexts can provide valuable insights.

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