

Carrying Capacity and Coping Mechanisms of Proficient Teachers in Relation to Workload

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-method research examines the teachers' current carrying capacity and coping mechanisms in terms of their workload in public elementary schools in Mobo South District, Division of Masbate Province for school year 2024-2025. Fifteen (15) public elementary school teachers and fifteen (15) school heads were selected through complete enumeration sampling. With the use of quantitative method, specifically a descriptive research design and qualitative method, specifically phenomenological research through a survey questionnaire, findings revealed that while teachers generally manage their core instructional duties and related responsibilities, tasks such as action research, ICT coordination, and home visitation were perceived as excessive burdens. To cope, teachers employed

strategies including social support, time management, and leisure activities, while school heads recommended interventions such as task delegation, role clarity, technology-assisted task simplification, and professional development to enhance workload management and resilience. The study concludes that while most teachers manage their workload effectively, tasks such as action research and ICT coordination require targeted support, with teachers relying on coping strategies like time management and social support to cope with demands. It is thus recommended that schools and districts establish sustainable workload policies and implement professional development workshops focused on time management and stress reduction to support teacher well-being.

Keywords: *carrying capacity, coping mechanisms, teacher workload, teacher well-being, workload management, public elementary teachers*

INTRODUCTION

Employees are the driving force of organizations, and in schools, teachers play this vital role in fulfilling the Department of Education's mandate to provide quality education. As teaching demands considerable intellectual, emotional, and physical effort – extending beyond classroom instruction to lesson planning, grading, and professional development – effective management of these tasks and responsibilities is essential to ensure the smooth operation of schools.

The Department of Education acknowledges that the workload of teachers is primarily burdened due to administrative work. With the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum and the continued evolution of the educational system, the demand placed on teachers is expected to rise, making it essential to evaluate their current workload capacity. Understanding whether teachers' workload aligns with the realistic performance expectation is critical, as overworked teachers are prone to burnout, diminished job satisfaction, and reduced effectiveness. Thus, examining how much workload teachers can realistically sustain without compromising their well-being and professional competence remains a primary concern.

In response to this, the DepEd Order No. 5, s. 2024, which is titled “Rationalization of Teachers’ Workload in Public Schools and Payment of Teaching Overload,” was implemented to address the public-school teachers’ workload and well-being. The policy aims to maximize teachings hours and provide fair compensation for teaching overload. This order mandates six hours of classroom teaching and two hours of ancillary tasks daily, which includes curriculum planning, curriculum delivery and pedagogy, assessment of learner progress, and homeroom guidance and management, while limiting teaching-related assignments to roles such as coordinator, trainer, adviser, and chairmanship. Although this policy marks a significant step toward promoting teacher welfare, it remains insufficient in fully addressing teachers’ workload concerns. The DepEd Order No. 2, s. 2024 with the title “Immediate Removal of Administrative Tasks of Public School Teachers” also mandates the removal of administrative tasks, which enable teachers to focus on their core function of teaching, ensuring that teachers’ workload and working hours are maximized for actual classroom teaching and tasks incidental to their normal teaching duties. Through the implementation of this policy, teachers’ workload is expected to decrease; however, its effectiveness is yet to be determined.

This study on teacher workload is therefore essential in ensuring the delivery of quality education and in fostering a conducive teaching and learning environment, consistent with the provisions of DepEd Order No. 5, s. 2024. Accordingly, this research examines teachers’ current workload carrying capacity, the coping mechanisms they employ to manage this workload, and the initiatives that may be implemented to strengthen workload management among teachers in the public elementary schools of Mobo South District, Division of Masbate Province for the school, year 2024-2025.

Based on these considerations, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the current carrying capacity of teachers in terms of their workload?
2. What coping mechanisms do teachers employ to cope with their workload?
3. What initiatives may be implemented to support teachers in managing their workload?

METHODS

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-method research design to determine the teachers’ current carrying capacity and coping mechanisms in public elementary schools for the school year 2024-2025 in the Mobo South District, Division of Masbate Province. According to Creswell (2012), a mixed-method research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem. This study used a quantitative method, specifically a descriptive research design. Garcia (2010) cited that descriptive research aims to describe systematically, functionally, accurately, and objectively a situation, problem, or phenomenon. Further, Calmorin and Calmorin (2005) cited that descriptive research focuses on present condition, the purpose of which is to find new truth. Therefore, the use of the descriptive method in the present study was appropriate. On the other hand, the qualitative method, specifically phenomenological research, was utilized in the interpretation of the data gathered from the responses of the participants to the open-ended question, along with the coping mechanisms teachers employed to cope with their workload, as indicated in the second part of the questionnaire. A phenomenological case study design permits people to share their experiences of a particular phenomenon (Ohman, 2005). According to Finlay (2012), “a phenomenological approach enables researchers to investigate how people interpret their experiences and translate the comprehension of said experience into awareness” (p. 12).

Research Locale

The participants in this study were all public elementary school teachers and all public elementary school heads in the Mobo South District, Division of Masbate Province. There was a total of one hundred fifty-eight (158) public elementary school teachers and fourteen (14) public elementary school heads in the

Mobo South District as the main participants of this study. Fifteen (15 of these public elementary school teachers were chosen to answer guide questions related to the coping mechanisms they employed to cope with their workload, and fifteen (15) school heads were chosen to answer the interview guide questions related to the initiatives to be implemented to support teachers in managing their workload. These participants were coded using *P1* for *Participant 1*, *P2* for *Participant 2*, and so on, rather than their real names, to maintain confidentiality and ensure the protection of their privacy throughout all processes and stages of the study. On the other hand, school heads were coded as *School Head 1*, *School Head 2*, so on.

An adopted survey questionnaire from Naz, R. (2024) was utilized to determine the teachers' current carrying capacity and coping mechanism in public elementary schools for the school year 2024-2025 in the Mobo South District, Division of Masbate.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of two main parts. The first part included a checklist and an assessment of the teachers' current carrying capacity in terms of workload. It presented sixteen (16) specific tasks or policies, each of which was evaluated by the respondents using the options: Able (A), Just Right (JR), or Excessive (E). Respondents were also asked to provide reasons for their ratings. The response options were interpreted as follows: Able (A) – the teacher can manage the task or policy without difficulty; Just Right (JR) – the task or policy is manageable and neither too easy nor too difficult; and Excessive (E) – the task or policy exceeds the teacher's capacity and is unmanageable. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of interview guide questions. It included coping mechanisms employed by teachers, which were answered by selected teachers, and initiatives to support teachers in managing their workload, which were answered by school heads.

Treatment of Data

The public schools district supervisor of the Mobo South District gave permission for the study to be conducted before the actual gathering of data. Informed consent regarding the purpose, procedures involved, and ethical considerations was secured in writing from participants. They were given a guarantee that all the data they would provide would be dealt with the utmost confidentiality in adherence to the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). Participants were interviewed on an individual basis, in an in-depth manner, at a time that was most convenient for them, as a way of facilitating openness, while at the same time minimizing disruptions. Interviews were audio-recorded upon consent and transcribed verbatim, quoting data accurately in order to ensure accuracy of information (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Since the study was a mixed-methods study, which included qualitative data, the collected data were analyzed and interpreted using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were repeatedly read to attain an immersive familiarity with the data. Coding of significant statements was done, following which organization of themes was performed that represented patterns shared in the experiences of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Findings were made trustworthy by using the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability through systematic documentation, careful interpretation, and rich contextual description.

Sampling Technique

Regarding the sampling procedure used in this study, complete enumeration sampling or total population sampling was utilized to identify all public elementary school teachers holding Teacher I-III positions and all public elementary school heads in the Mobo South District, Division of Masbate Province. According to Ganapati et. al. (2010) complete enumeration sampling method is a method used in surveys and data analysis to examine all possible elements in a finite set. It involves the selection, acquisition, and quantification of a part of the population, with the aim of providing a representative sample based on specific criteria. Danius, Takis, Mechaelides (1997) also added that this approach is particularly usefeul

when dealing with small sample sizes, as it allows for an exact test to be conducted by considering the complete distribution of the test statistic. Teacher-participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, a strategy often employed in qualitative research to ensure that participants are information-rich cases who can meaningfully contribute to the understanding of the research problem (Palinkas et. al., 2015).

Ethical Considerations

The researcher made sure that the ethical standards in conducting the research were strictly followed. Participation is voluntary, and participants were informed of the purpose of the research, its risks, and its benefits before they took part in the study. As per the guidelines stated in the CHED Memorandum Number 15, series of 2019, which emphasizes the protection of human participants in research based on the concepts of informed consent, autonomy, beneficence, and justice, the participants were made aware that they had the right to decline to participate or to withdraw from the research at any time without any obligation. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were strictly protected, and no unauthorized person had any access to the information gathered. Moreover, as stated in Republic Act Number 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, all personal data gathered from the participants were processed, stored, and disposed of in a lawful, secure, and specific manner for the prescribed purpose to protect against unauthorized access, disclosure, or misuse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Current Carrying Capacity of Teachers in terms of their Workload

This section provided an analysis of the data pertaining to the current carrying capacity of teachers in relation to their workload. It emphasized the implications of the amount and nature of the workload on the efficiency, well-being, and overall performance of teachers by analyzing both quantitative and qualitative findings. Table 1 shows the current carrying capacity of teachers.

Table 1. *Current Carrying Capacity of Teachers in terms of their Workload*

DEPED ORDER NO. 5, S. 2024	ABLE	JUST RIGHT	EXCESSIVE
1. Teaching Load			
a. Six (6) hours of actual classroom teaching	65	78	15
2. Ancillary Tasks			
• Curriculum Planning			
a. Preparation of lesson plans/daily lesson logs	67	79	12
b. Action Research	10	52	96
c. Attendance to Learning Action Cell (LAC)	103	46	9
Mean	61	64	33
• Curriculum Delivery and Pedagogy			
a. Preparation of instructional aids and materials			
b. Checking and recording learners'			

Table 1 shows that the teachers' workload was generally within their carrying capacity. Teaching load was interpreted as Just Right, while ancillary tasks and teaching-related assignments were interpreted as Able. This means that most teachers could manage their regular classroom instruction and related responsibilities, although some tasks still demanded more time, effort, and support. The six-hour actual classroom teaching load was considered manageable by the highest number of respondents, with 78 teachers rating it as Just Right. This suggests that classroom teaching remains sustainable when teachers are able to prepare lessons, organize routines, and manage their time effectively.

This finding supports the provision of the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers that classroom instruction should not exceed six hours per day. It is also consistent with Binalay and Brobo (2025), who emphasized that planning, prioritization, and goal setting help teachers maintain effectiveness and well-being. Similarly, Sultoni (2024) noted that careful planning and reduced interruptions contribute to a more balanced workload and greater professional satisfaction.

Although the overall result for teaching load was manageable, 15 teachers still rated it as Excessive. This implies that classroom teaching may become difficult when combined with advisory duties, reports, extended working hours, and the diverse learning needs of pupils. Thus, the challenge is not only the number of teaching hours but also the additional responsibilities attached to the teacher's daily work.

For ancillary tasks, the overall interpretation was Able, showing that teachers could generally manage responsibilities related to planning, instruction, assessment, and homeroom management. However, the results also reveal that not all ancillary tasks carried the same level of difficulty. Action research was the clearest concern, with 96 teachers rating it as Excessive. This indicates that research-related work may exceed teachers' capacity when added to regular teaching duties without enough time, training, mentoring, and institutional support. Francisco et al. (2024) explained that teachers face barriers in action research such as time constraints, limited resources, and lack of institutional support. Caabas et al. (2024) also found that teacher-researchers experience stress and time pressure because of heavy workloads and overlapping deadlines.

Other ancillary tasks, such as instructional material preparation, attendance recording, classroom management, assessment, report preparation, parent conferences, and home visits, were generally manageable. These tasks appeared to be within teachers' capacity because they were already part of regular school routines. However, some of them may still become demanding when deadlines overlap or when technical problems occur, especially in report submission and documentation.

Teaching-related assignments were also interpreted as Able. This suggests that teachers could handle additional roles when the assignments matched their skills, experience, and available support. However, these results should be read carefully because not all 158 teachers held the same teaching-related assignments. Some roles applied only to teachers with specific designations.

Among the teaching-related assignments, ICT coordination emerged as another pressure point. Nine teachers rated this role as Excessive, indicating that ICT-related duties can be burdensome when performed alongside regular teaching work. Teachers handling ICT coordination are expected to manage digital tools, assist colleagues, troubleshoot technical issues, and support online platforms. Tømte and Wollscheid (2024) emphasized that ICT coordination requires management support and collaboration, while Jancarik and Hubert (2024) noted that the role becomes difficult when there is insufficient training, limited institutional support, and no adjustment in teaching responsibilities.

Overall, the findings indicate that the teacher-respondents generally managed their workload within their carrying capacity. However, action research and ICT coordination stood out as workload pressure points because they required additional time, technical skill, and support. The results suggest that teacher workload should not be evaluated only by individual tasks. Even duties rated as manageable may still create strain when they accumulate, overlap, or require specialized skills beyond regular classroom teaching.

Coping Mechanisms Employed by Teachers in Managing Workload

The second research question explored the coping mechanisms employed by the teacher-respondents in managing their workload. While the quantitative findings showed that most workload areas were generally manageable, the qualitative responses revealed that teachers still used different strategies to reduce stress, maintain productivity, and sustain their motivation. Five major themes emerged from the responses: social support, personal leisure activities, time and task management, spiritual practices, and outdoor and outdoor activities.

Table 2. *Coping Mechanisms Employed by Teachers in Managing Workload*

THEME	KEY COPING MECHANISMS	INTERPRETATION
Social Support	Talking with co-teachers, asking help from colleagues, seeking support from family and friends	Teachers cope through emotional and practical support from others
Personal Leisure Activities	Playing games, watching shows, reading, sleeping, digital painting, decluttering	Teachers use personal activities to relax and recover from work demands
Time and Task Management	Prioritizing tasks, using planners, making to-do lists, completing tasks one step at a time	Teachers manage workload through organization and planning
Spiritual Practices	Prayer, faith, personal reflection	Teachers draw emotional strength from spiritual coping
Outdoor Activities	Traveling, going out, going to the beach, window shopping	Teachers refresh themselves by temporarily disconnecting from work

The findings show that teachers used both social and personal coping mechanisms. Social support was evident in teachers' reliance on co-teachers, workmates, friends, and family members. This suggests that teachers do not cope with workload in isolation; instead, they seek emotional reassurance, advice, and practical help from people around them. Gonzales (2024) emphasized that peer support groups, regular check-ins, and collaborative discussions help create a sense of connection among educators. Rowe and Walinga (2024) also noted that peer mentoring can support teacher resilience and help reduce workplace stress .

Teachers also engaged in personal leisure activities to recover from workload pressure. These included watching shows, playing games, reading, sleeping, digital painting, window shopping, and decluttering. These activities served as outlets for relaxation and helped teachers regain energy after school-related responsibilities. This implies that personal time and self-care are important in sustaining teachers' emotional well-being and preventing exhaustion. The responses also show that coping does not always involve formal interventions; sometimes, simple leisure activities help teachers manage daily stress .

Time and task management also emerged as a practical coping strategy. Some teachers managed workload by prioritizing urgent tasks, using planners or to-do lists, breaking large tasks into smaller steps, and completing responsibilities one at a time. This indicates that teachers use structured strategies to prevent tasks from becoming overwhelming. Sultoni (2024) supports this finding by emphasizing that time management helps educators improve productivity and reduce stress. The result suggests that teachers may benefit from further support in planning, prioritization, and workload organization .

Spiritual practices were also used by teachers as a source of emotional strength. Some teachers mentioned prayer and faith as ways of coping with workload-related stress. This suggests that for some teachers, spirituality provides comfort, hope, and inner stability during demanding work situations. Miles and Marburg (2025) and Bowling (2025) emphasized that spiritual practices can strengthen teachers' resilience and help them find meaning in difficult circumstances .

Outdoor activities were another form of coping. Teachers mentioned traveling, going out, going to the beach, and window shopping as ways to relax and detach temporarily from work pressure. These activities allowed teachers to refresh themselves emotionally and mentally. Nilo and Guibong (2024) noted that travel can reduce stress and fatigue, while Nong et al. (2022) emphasized that leisure activities support mental health and well-being .

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers cope with workload through a combination of interpersonal support, personal relaxation, task organization, spiritual grounding, and recreational activities. These coping mechanisms help them maintain balance despite work demands. However, the findings also suggest that coping should not depend only on individual effort. Schools may strengthen teacher well-being

by promoting peer support, protected personal time, time management training, and holistic wellness programs that address both professional and personal needs

Initiatives to Support Teachers in Managing Workload

The third research question identified the initiatives that may be implemented to support teachers in managing their workload. Based on the responses of the school heads, the proposed initiatives focused not only on reducing tasks but also on improving the way work is assigned, scheduled, simplified, and supported. Four major themes emerged: task delegation and role clarity, time management and scheduling support, simplification of tasks using technology, and professional development and capacity building.

Table 3. *Initiatives to Support Teachers in Managing Workload*

THEME	PROPOSED INITIATIVES	IMPLICATION
Task Delegation and Role Clarity	Clear task delegation guidelines, equitable distribution of co-curricular tasks, additional support personnel	Promotes fair workload distribution and reduces role confusion
Time Management and Scheduling Support	Protected time for planning and assessment, fewer after-school meetings, careful scheduling of school activities	Prevents work spillover and supports teachers' work-life balance
Simplification of Tasks Using Technology	Streamlined forms, digital tools for grading, attendance, reporting, and communication	Reduces repetitive paperwork and improves work efficiency
Professional Development and Capacity Building	Training on time management, prioritization, digital skills, planning tools, mentoring, and peer sharing	Strengthens teachers' skills in managing workload demands

The first initiative focused on task delegation and role clarity. School heads emphasized the need for clear guidelines, fair distribution of co-curricular tasks, and additional personnel to assist with non-teaching duties. This suggests that workload management requires an organized system where responsibilities are clearly assigned and equitably distributed. Zamudio and Carbonell (2025) emphasized that task delegation becomes ineffective when instructions are unclear and resources are insufficient. Ceneza and Tagadiad (2022) also noted that unclear delegation systems and limited support may affect decision-making and organizational performance.

The second initiative was time management and scheduling support. School heads recommended protected time for planning and assessment, fewer after-school meetings, designated time for paperwork, and careful scheduling of school activities to avoid overlapping deadlines. This finding suggests that teachers need time within the workday to complete essential tasks without extending work into personal hours. Kadir et al. (2020) stated that assigned time helps teachers focus on lesson planning, instruction, and assessment more effectively. Howe (2025) and Juniper Education (2023) also emphasized that limiting unnecessary meetings and keeping activities within school hours may improve work-life balance and reduce exhaustion.

The third initiative involved the simplification of tasks using technology. School heads proposed streamlining forms and reports and using digital tools to automate routine tasks such as attendance, grading, communication, and report submission. This suggests that technology can help reduce repetitive manual work and allow teachers to focus more on instruction and learner support. Peralta and Lingatong (2022) noted that paperwork and administrative work in DepEd have often been completed manually and repeatedly, consuming time that could be used for instruction. Gupta (2022) also emphasized that digital platforms and learning management systems can automate administrative duties, save time, and improve efficiency.

The fourth initiative was professional development and capacity building. School heads recommended training on time management, work efficiency, prioritization, digital skills, organization, planning tools, and setting boundaries. They also suggested mentoring and small-group sharing to allow teachers to learn from one another. This indicates that teacher support should include not only workload reduction but also skill-building. Batanero et al. (2020) and Barkley and Major (2020) emphasized that professional development helps teachers manage instructional tasks more effectively. Manegdeg and Paglinawan (2024) also found that professional development and collaboration support workload management, while heavy workloads may limit teachers' participation in such opportunities.⁹ⁱ

Overall, the findings show that supporting teachers in managing workload requires both structural and developmental initiatives. Clear task delegation, realistic scheduling, technology-assisted simplification, and continuous professional development can help create a more manageable and sustainable work environment. These initiatives may also improve teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and instructional effectiveness by reducing unnecessary burden and strengthening teachers' capacity to handle work demands.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the workload of proficient teachers in Mobo South District was generally within their carrying capacity, particularly in terms of regular teaching load, most ancillary tasks, and several teaching-related assignments. However, action research and ICT coordination emerged as major workload pressure points because these tasks require additional time, technical skill, mentoring, and institutional support. This indicates that although most teachers can manage their regular responsibilities, workload becomes more challenging when specialized tasks are added to their teaching duties without sufficient support.

The findings also show that teachers manage workload demands through both personal and social coping mechanisms, including social support, leisure activities, time and task management, spiritual practices, and outdoor activities. These strategies help teachers maintain well-being, productivity, and resilience despite workload pressures. Moreover, the school heads' proposed initiatives highlight the need for clear task delegation, protected time for planning, technology-assisted task simplification, and continuous professional development to create a more sustainable work environment for teachers.

Overall, effective workload management requires both individual coping strategies and institutional support. Schools and district leaders should provide targeted assistance for demanding tasks, streamline administrative processes, strengthen professional development, and establish workload policies that balance task demands with teacher well-being. Through these measures, teachers may be better supported in sustaining instructional effectiveness, professional productivity, and overall well-being.

Recommendations

According to the results school and district leaders should provide support for high-demand workload areas especially in action research and ICT coordination. Educators who are assigned to these roles may get time, guidance, technical support and fewer overlapping responsibilities to make sure these duties do not interfere with their main teaching jobs.

School administrators need to improve workload management systems by creating task assignments, fair sharing of extracurricular responsibilities and realistic planning of school events. Dedicated time, for lesson planning, assessment and documentation can be given during the school day to ensure that work does not go into teachers' time. These steps support the study's finding that good workload management requires delegation, smart use of time use of technology and continuous professional development.

We need to look into digital tools to cut down on unnecessary paperwork and make tasks easier to do. Schools could use systems to keep track of attendance grades and reports and to help teachers talk to each other. This would let teachers focus more on teaching and helping students. This idea goes along with the study that wants to make administrative work simpler and get rid of paperwork.

Teacher training programs should be designed to fit the needs of teachers. These programs could teach teachers how to manage their time deal with stress prioritize tasks, use tools do action research and take care of themselves. Teachers also need support from others so school wellness programs could include support groups, mentoring and things that help teachers feel good. Teachers like to do things of school like spend time with friends practice their faith and go outside to deal with stress.

More researchers should do studies like this one in school districts, levels or areas to see how teachers feel about their workload and how they cope. Digital tools for teachers are very important. Teacher workload management and well-being are also very important. By doing this we can make plans that're more flexible and work better for teachers in different situations, which can help with digital tools, for teachers and teacher workload management and well-being.

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