

From Classroom to Exit: A Correlational Study of Burnout, Work Conditions, and Teacher Attrition in DepEd

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how workplace stress contributes to teacher burnout and the growing intention to leave the profession. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, it examines 135 public elementary school teachers from the Tago 2 District of Surigao del Sur. The findings show that teacher burnout is present at a moderate level, with institutional pressures such as workload demands, policies, and administrative expectations emerging as the strongest source of stress. Logistical concerns and student-related challenges also add to the daily strain experienced by teachers, while personal and instructional factors contribute but to a lesser extent. Interestingly, demographic factors like age, gender, and educational attainment do not significantly influence burnout levels. Instead, years in service and school size show clearer links, suggesting that burnout develops over time and is shaped more by working conditions than personal characteristics. Overall, the results highlight a gradual path from sustained stress to emotional exhaustion, which may eventually lead teachers toward leaving the profession. This study emphasizes the need for stronger institutional support systems and workload management strategies to help teachers remain motivated, healthy, and committed to their roles.

Keywords: *teacher burnout, departure trends, DepEd teachers, institutional stress, workload, teacher well-being, quantitative study*

INTRODUCTION

The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines and the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers establish that teachers play a crucial role in nation-building and must be supported through fair compensation, adequate benefits, and reasonable working conditions. However, despite these legal protections, many teachers in the Department of Education continue to face increasing workloads, administrative responsibilities, and workplace pressures. Such challenges often lead to burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, decreased motivation, and reduced job satisfaction. This research aims to understand the level of burnout among teachers and how it shapes their decision to stay or leave teaching. By identifying the main causes and effects of burnout, the study hopes to provide useful insights

that can help improve teacher support, strengthen retention, and promote better working conditions in schools.

Agyapong et al. (2022) found that teachers often experience ongoing stress that overlaps with burnout, anxiety, and depression. Similarly, Xie et al. (2022) explained that burnout can take different forms depending on the level of resources and support available to teachers. Real and Flordeliz (2024) also emphasized that low salaries, limited career advancement, and heavy workloads contribute significantly to teacher burnout. Turner and Garvis (2023) further observed that increasing job demands are strongly associated with higher levels of burnout among educators. In contrast, Beiträge (2024) pointed out that existing frameworks may not fully reflect the complexity of burnout in real workplace settings.

Teacher burnout in the Philippines is increasingly linked to teachers leaving the Department of Education, driven by poor working conditions, low salaries, heavy workloads, limited career growth, and weak institutional and mental health support (Tantay et al., 2024; Real & Flordeliz, 2024; Alicamen et al., 2022). National data also shows a large number of teacher resignations and ongoing recruitment challenges, with over 30,000 educators leaving DepEd between 2022 and 2023 (Chi, 2024), alongside systemic issues in hiring and career progression (Angara, 2024). Similar patterns are observed in local contexts such as Tago 2 District, where teachers exit for alternative career paths while others remain but experience limited advancement. Despite these trends, there is still insufficient research focusing on how burnout develops and influences teacher attrition at the local level, highlighting the need for a more context-specific study.

This study highlights the need for a more in-depth and context-specific understanding of teacher burnout in the Philippine education system, particularly in localized settings like the Tago 2 District. While burnout is already recognized as a major factor in teacher attrition, limited research has explored how its psychological, institutional, and workload-related pressures interact in real school environments. By examining how burnout influences public elementary school teachers' decisions to leave the profession, the study provides practical insights into the lived challenges teachers face. Its findings may help education leaders and policymakers develop more targeted strategies to improve teacher well-being, strengthen retention, and address the systemic issues contributing to burnout.

Theoretical Framework

This study on teacher burnout is anchored on multiple theoretical perspectives to explain how psychological, institutional, and environmental factors interact and influence teachers' well-being and decisions to leave the profession. It draws mainly from the Maslach Burnout Theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and the Theory of Migration to provide a comprehensive understanding of burnout and departure trends among DepEd teachers in the Tago 2 District.

The Maslach Burnout Theory defines burnout as a syndrome consisting of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. It emphasizes that prolonged exposure to high job demands, particularly in people-oriented professions like teaching, leads to chronic stress and burnout. In this study, it helps explain how workload, policy demands, and limited institutional support contribute to teachers' psychological strain and eventual withdrawal from the profession.

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) explains burnout through the frustration of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When teachers experience limited decision-making power, feelings of inefficiency, or weak social connections in the workplace, their motivation declines, increasing vulnerability to burnout. Overall, these theories collectively explain how external pressures and internal psychological needs converge to shape teacher burnout and influence career decisions in the study setting.

Conceptual Framework

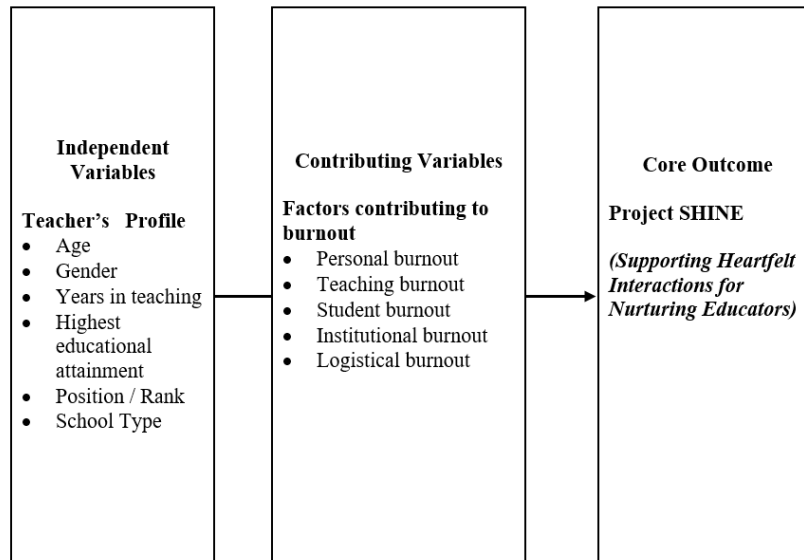


Figure 1. *Schematic Diagram of the Study*

The conceptual framework of this study examines how teachers' profile characteristics and burnout-related factors interact to influence the implementation of Project SHINE as the core outcome. The framework is grounded in a quantitative approach, focusing on the relationships among measurable variables.

The independent variables consist of the teachers' profile, which includes age, gender, years in teaching, highest educational attainment, position or rank, and school type. These variables represent the demographic and professional background of the respondents and are assumed to influence how teachers experience and respond to workplace demands. Differences in these characteristics may result in varying levels of exposure and sensitivity to stressors in the teaching environment.

The second component of the framework includes the contributing variables, specifically the factors contributing to burnout. These are categorized into personal burnout, teaching burnout, student-related burnout, institutional burnout, and logistical burnout. These dimensions capture the different sources of stress experienced by teachers, ranging from individual-level pressures to organizational and systemic challenges. Each category represents a measurable construct that reflects the intensity and nature of burnout experienced in the workplace.

The framework assumes that both the teachers' profile and the identified burnout factors interact and significantly influence the study's core outcome, which is Project SHINE. This outcome represents the intervention or program response designed to address burnout among teachers. The effectiveness, relevance, or level of implementation of Project SHINE is expected to vary depending on the teachers' characteristics and the degree to which they experience different types of burnouts.

Furthermore, the framework implies that understanding the relationship between profile variables and burnout factors is essential in designing targeted and responsive interventions. By identifying which groups of teachers are more vulnerable and which burnout dimensions are most prominent, Project SHINE can be better aligned to address specific needs within the school context. Overall, the conceptual framework highlights that teacher burnout is a multidimensional issue influenced by both personal and professional factors. It also emphasizes that any intervention, such as Project SHINE, must be evidence-based and tailored according to the identified patterns of burnout and teacher characteristics to ensure its effectiveness.

METHODS

This study adopted a quantitative research design using a descriptive-correlational approach to examine teacher burnout within the Department of Education (DepEd). Guided by a pragmatist perspective, this phase serves as the foundation of the study, focusing on providing an objective understanding of the key stressors experienced by teachers in the Tago 2 District of Surigao del Sur. The respondents of the study were public elementary school teachers from the Tago 2 District. A complete enumeration was employed, involving all 135 teachers from 16 public elementary schools located in both coastal and inland areas. This approach ensured that the study captured a comprehensive and representative picture of the teaching workforce in the district.

Data were gathered using a structured, researcher-made survey questionnaire aligned with the study's objectives. The instrument consisted of three main sections. The first gathered the respondents' demographic profile, including age, gender, years in service, highest educational attainment, grade level taught, and school size. The second measured the factors contributing to teacher burnout across seven dimensions: personal, teaching-related, student-related, empathy, achievement, institutional, and logistical factors. The third examined the relationship between respondents' profiles and the identified burnout factors.

For data analysis, frequency and percentage were used to describe the respondents' demographic profile. Weighted mean and standard deviation were applied to determine the level and extent of burnout factors, with ranking used to identify the most significant sources of stress. To test relationships between variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the strength and direction of associations between teacher profiles and burnout factors. In addition, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether significant differences exist in burnout levels when respondents are grouped according to their demographic characteristics. Overall, this systematic quantitative approach provided a solid empirical basis for understanding patterns of teacher burnout and well-being within the district.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. *Profile of the Respondent*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	25–30	27	20
	31–35	38	28.15
	36–40	29	21.48
	41–45	16	11.85
	46–50	10	7.41
	51–55	6	4.44
	Over 55	9	6.67
	Total	135	100
Gender	Male	10	7.41
	Female	125	92.59
	Total	135	100
Years in Service	0–3 years	17	12.59
	4–10 years	72	53.33
	More than 10 years	46	34.07
	Total	135	100
Highest Educational Attainment	College graduate	38	28.15
	With MA units	90	66.67
	MA graduate	5	3.7
	With PhD/EdD units	2	1.48
	Total	135	100

Position/Rank	Teacher I	37	27.41
	Teacher II	24	17.78
	Teacher III	56	41.48
	Master Teacher I	14	10.37
	Master Teacher II	2	1.48
	Master Teacher III	2	1.48
	Total	135	100
Grade Level Taught	Kindergarten	19	14.07
	Grade 1	17	12.59
	Grade 2	17	12.59
	Grade 3	20	14.81
	Grade 4	17	12.59
	Grade 5	18	13.33
	Grade 6	21	15.56
	Multigrade	6	4.44
Total	135	100	
School Size	Small school	97	71.85
	Medium	38	28.15
	Total	135	100

The demographic profile of the 135 respondents reveals a workforce dominated by female educators, who comprise 92.59% of the total sample. This gender distribution is consistent with the traditional landscape of Philippine elementary education. Age-wise, the participants are relatively young to middle-aged, with the largest concentration found in the 31–35 age bracket (28.15%), followed by those aged 36–40 (21.48%). This suggests a workforce that is in the peak of its professional life, balancing both classroom demands and potential family responsibilities.

Regarding professional tenure and advancement, the majority of teachers have rendered 4 to 10 years of service (53.33%), placing them in a mid-career stage. This experience level is reflected in their professional ranks, where the Teacher III designation is the most prevalent at 41.48%. Furthermore, the data indicates a strong pursuit of professional development, as a significant 66.67% of the respondents have already earned units toward a Master’s Degree, demonstrating a drive for career progression despite the systemic challenges they face.

Finally, the organizational context of these teachers is characterized by small-scale environments. A vast majority of the respondents (71.85%) are stationed in small schools, which often entails a higher degree of multi-tasking and limited administrative support. The distribution across grade levels remains fairly uniform, though Grade 6 teachers represent the largest specific group at 15.56%. Taken together, this profile depicts a highly qualified, mid-career, and predominantly female workforce operating within small school settings factors that are central to analyzing the specific manifestations of burnout and the resulting departure trends in the Tago 2 District.

Table 2. *Summary on the Primary Factors Contributing to the Burnout among Teachers in DepEd*

Indicator	Mean	Adjectival Rating	Burnout Level
Personal Burnout	3.13	Somewhat Agree	Moderate
Teaching Burnout	3.02	Somewhat Agree	Moderate
Student Burnout	3.22	Somewhat Agree	Moderate
Institutional Burnout	3.3	Somewhat Agree	Moderate
Logistical Burnout	3.26	Somewhat Agree	Moderate
Overall Mean	3.18	Somewhat Agree	Moderate

Table 2 presents the level of teacher burnout across five dimensions: personal, teaching, student, institutional, and logistical burnout, along with the overall mean. Overall, the results show a moderate level of burnout among teachers, with an overall mean of 3.18, interpreted as “Somewhat Agree.” This indicates

that while burnout is not at an extreme level, it is present and consistently experienced by teachers in the district.

Among the indicators, institutional burnout obtained the highest mean (3.30), suggesting that school-related systems, policies, workload structure, and administrative demands are the most significant contributors to teacher stress. This is followed closely by logistical burnout (3.26) and student-related burnout (3.22), indicating that challenges in managing resources, classroom demands, and student behavior also play a notable role in increasing teachers' workload pressure. Meanwhile, personal burnout (3.13) and teaching-related burnout (3.02) registered slightly lower but still moderate levels. This suggests that while teachers experience strain in their personal well-being and instructional tasks, these factors are less intense compared to institutional and external work-related pressures. This is consistent with findings that personal coping capacity can buffer but not fully eliminate burnout caused by systemic stressors (Chang, 2023; Madigan & Kim, 2024).

Overall, the findings imply that teacher burnout in the studied context is primarily driven by system-level and organizational factors rather than purely individual teaching concerns. This highlights the importance of addressing institutional practices, workload distribution, and logistical support to effectively reduce burnout and improve teacher well-being.

Table 3. *Significant Relationship between the Profile of Respondents and the Primary Factors Contributing to the Burnout among Teachers in DepEd*

Category	Variable Tested	r-value	p-value	Conclusion
Age	Personal Burnout	-0.027	0.758	Not significant
	Teaching Burnout	0.028	0.748	Not significant
	Student Burnout	-0.022	0.798	Not significant
	Institutional Burnout	0.009	0.915	Not significant
	Logistical Burnout	-0.031	0.723	Not significant
Gender	Personal Burnout	0.041	0.636	Not significant
	Teaching Burnout	0.012	0.892	Not significant
	Student Burnout	0.112	0.197	Not significant
	Institutional Burnout	0.018	0.84	Not significant
	Logistical Burnout	0	0.999	Not significant
Years in Service	Personal Burnout	0.179	0.038	Significant
	Teaching Burnout	0.17	0.05	Not significant
	Student Burnout	0.179	0.038	Significant
	Institutional Burnout	0.117	0.177	Not significant
	Logistical Burnout	0.182	0.035	Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	Personal Burnout	0.128	0.139	Not significant
	Teaching Burnout	0.123	0.158	Not significant
	Student Burnout	0.085	0.324	Not significant
	Institutional Burnout	0.084	0.335	Not significant
	Logistical Burnout	0.031	0.723	Not significant
Position / Rank	Personal Burnout	0.044	0.613	Not significant
	Teaching Burnout	-0.014	0.876	Not significant
	Student Burnout	0.007	0.94	Not significant
	Institutional Burnout	0.013	0.885	Not significant
	Logistical Burnout	0.019	0.823	Not significant
Grade level Taught	Personal Burnout	-0.136	0.117	Not significant
	Teaching Burnout	-0.039	0.652	Not significant
	Student Burnout	-0.086	0.322	Not significant
	Institutional Burnout	-0.017	0.847	Not significant
	Logistical Burnout	-0.065	0.455	Not significant
School size	Personal Burnout	0.182	0.035	Significant
	Teaching Burnout	0.118	0.174	Not significant
	Student Burnout	0.119	0.168	Not significant
	Institutional Burnout	0.03	0.728	Not significant
	Logistical Burnout	0.068	0.431	Not significant

Table 3 presents the relationship between selected teacher profile variables and different dimensions of burnout (personal, teaching, student, institutional, and logistical burnout). Age, gender, highest educational attainment, position/rank, and grade level taught all show no significant relationship with any type of burnout, as indicated by p-values greater than 0.05. This implies that burnout levels among teachers are not influenced by demographic characteristics or academic qualifications, suggesting that burnout is experienced relatively uniformly across these groups. This aligns with the view that burnout is primarily an occupational syndrome rather than a personal trait issue (World Health Organization, 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

In contrast, years in service shows a significant relationship with personal burnout ($r = 0.179$, $p = 0.038$) and student burnout ($r = 0.179$, $p = 0.038$). This indicates that the longer teachers stay in service, the more likely they are to experience burnout related to personal exhaustion and student-related demands. This suggests cumulative stress over time as a contributing factor to burnout. This supports findings that chronic job stress accumulates and contributes to burnout among long-serving teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021; OECD, 2020).

Similarly, school size is significantly related to personal burnout ($r = 0.182$, $p = 0.035$). This implies that teachers in larger schools may experience higher levels of personal burnout, possibly due to heavier workloads, larger class sizes, or increased administrative demands. This is consistent with recent studies showing that organizational conditions such as class size and workload intensity are strong predictors of teacher burnout (Chang, 2022; Aloe et al., 2014).

Overall, the findings suggest that organizational and work-related factors (years in service and school size) are more influential on teacher burnout than personal or demographic characteristics. This highlights the need for institutional interventions focusing on workload management and long-term teacher support rather than demographic-based solutions.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that teacher burnout in Tago 2 District is shaped more by workplace conditions than by individual characteristics. Although the overall level of burnout among teachers is generally moderate, the results clearly show that pressures coming from school systems particularly administrative demands, resource limitations, and logistical challenges play a major role in teachers' emotional and professional exhaustion.

The data further reveal that burnout is not experienced equally by all teachers. Those who have stayed longer in the profession and those working in certain school environments tend to experience higher levels of strain, indicating that burnout builds up over time and is influenced by the context in which teachers work.

Taken together, both the statistical results and teachers' experiences point to a consistent pattern: sustained stress is contributing to emotional exhaustion and growing intentions to leave the profession. This highlights that teacher attrition is not a sudden decision but a gradual response to ongoing challenges in the workplace.

In light of these findings, addressing teacher burnout requires more than general support programs. It calls for meaningful, system-level changes that reduce workload pressures, improve resource management, and strengthen emotional support for teachers. Initiatives such as Project SHINE may serve as a step toward creating healthier, more sustainable working conditions and helping teachers remain in the profession with renewed motivation and well-being.

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