

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

Jonalyn G. Losdo¹, Ivy S. Diaz²

¹ *Anahao Bag-o Elementary School*

² *North Eastern Mindanao State University*

*jonalyn.losdo@deped.gov.ph, isdiaz@nemsu.edu.ph

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how workplace stress contributes to teacher burnout and influences teachers' intention to leave the profession among public elementary school teachers in Tago 2 District, Surigao del Sur. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, the study gathered data from 135 teachers assigned to different public elementary schools in the district. Most respondents were young to mid-career female teachers with more than four years of teaching experience. Many were assigned to small rural schools where limited resources, geographic isolation, and restricted access to professional development continue to challenge daily teaching conditions. The results showed that teachers experienced a moderate level of

burnout, with an overall mean score of 3.18. Among the identified dimensions, institutional burnout emerged as the most evident source of stress. Teachers commonly struggled with heavy administrative workload, changing policies, non-teaching responsibilities, and grading demands. Although teaching burnout registered the lowest mean, many respondents still reported exhaustion and frustration related to classroom instruction and student management. The analysis also revealed that years in service had a significant positive relationship with all burnout dimensions, indicating that prolonged exposure to workplace stress increases teachers' vulnerability to burnout over time. School size was likewise associated with personal burnout, with teachers in larger schools reporting greater exhaustion. In contrast, age, gender, educational attainment, rank, and grade level taught showed no significant relationship with burnout. The findings highlight the need for stronger institutional support, manageable workloads, and targeted stress management programs to help sustain teacher well-being and improve retention in rural public schools.

Keywords: *teacher burnout, departure trends, institutional stress, workload management, teacher well-being*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine education system is anchored on the constitutional mandate of the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education, as enshrined in the Republic of the Philippines Constitution of 1987. In support of this principle, legal frameworks such as the Republic Act 4670 affirm the State's responsibility to provide teachers with competitive compensation, secure tenure, and humane working conditions. These policy safeguards are intended to ensure not only teacher welfare but also the

sustained delivery of quality instruction in public schools. However, despite these formal protections, teachers under the Department of Education (Philippines) continue to experience growing job demands characterized by increasing workloads, expanded administrative duties, and heightened institutional pressures. Over time, these conditions have been widely associated with occupational burnout, commonly manifested through emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and declining job satisfaction, all of which have direct implications on instructional quality and teacher retention.

Recent empirical studies reinforce the persistence and severity of this concern across both international and local contexts. Agyapong et al. (2022) emphasize that teachers frequently experience sustained occupational stress that closely intersects with burnout and anxiety, while Turner and Garvis (2023) report that escalating job demands significantly predict higher levels of burnout among educators. In the Philippine setting, the issue is further underscored by alarming attrition trends, with more than 30,000 teachers reportedly leaving DepEd between 2022 and 2023 (Chi, 2024). Similar patterns are observed in localized contexts such as Tago 2 District, where systemic challenges related to workload distribution and career progression remain evident. Although existing literature recognizes burnout as a major contributor to teacher attrition (Real & Flordeliz, 2024; Chi, 2024), there remains a limited body of quantitative research that systematically examines how institutional pressures interact with teacher profiles within specific local settings. This gap is also noted in broader policy discussions, including recommendations by UNESCO (2023), which call for stronger evidence-based interventions to address teacher well-being.

In response to this gap, the present study seeks to quantitatively determine the level of burnout among public school teachers and examine how these measurable indicators relate to selected professional and demographic profiles. By identifying the key institutional and logistical factors that contribute to burnout, this research aims to generate empirical evidence that can inform targeted interventions, improve teacher support systems, strengthen retention strategies, and promote more sustainable working conditions in schools. Guided by established frameworks on occupational stress and job demand theories, the study ultimately seeks to provide a clearer understanding of how workplace conditions translate into teacher well-being outcomes. This investigation therefore proceeds with a focus on the following research questions: i). What is the profile of respondents in terms of age, gender, years in teaching, highest educational attainment, grade level taught and school size? ii) What are the primary factors contributing to the burnout among teachers in DepEd? iii). Is there a significant relationship between the profile of respondents and the primary factors contributing to the burnout among teachers in DepEd?

Theoretical Framework

This study on teacher burnout is grounded in multiple theoretical perspectives that collectively explain how psychological, institutional, and environmental conditions interact to shape teachers' well-being and their decisions to remain in or leave the profession. It primarily draws on the Maslach Burnout Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and the Theory of Migration to provide a comprehensive lens for understanding burnout and attrition among teachers in the Department of Education (Philippines), particularly within the Tago 2 District context.

The Maslach Burnout Theory conceptualizes burnout as a multidimensional syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment. It posits that prolonged exposure to high job demands, especially in helping professions such as teaching, gradually depletes an individual's emotional and psychological resources. In this study, the framework is used to explain how sustained workload demands, policy-related pressures, and limited institutional support contribute to teachers' emotional strain and eventual disengagement from their professional roles.

Complementing this, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) explains changes in teacher motivation through the satisfaction or frustration of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are undermined—such as when teachers experience limited decision-making authority, excessive administrative tasks, or reduced opportunities to exercise instructional creativity—

intrinsic motivation declines while vulnerability to burnout increases. In this sense, SDT helps clarify how organizational conditions translate into internal psychological responses that affect teachers' commitment and performance.

Finally, the Theory of Migration provides an additional lens by framing teacher attrition as a response to “push” factors such as workplace stress, inadequate support, and poor working conditions, alongside “pull” factors found in alternative employment opportunities. Within this framework, burnout is not only understood as an individual psychological outcome but also as a catalyst for movement away from the profession. Taken together, these theoretical perspectives offer an integrated explanation of how external pressures and internal motivational dynamics converge to influence burnout and career decisions among teachers in the study setting.

Conceptual Framework

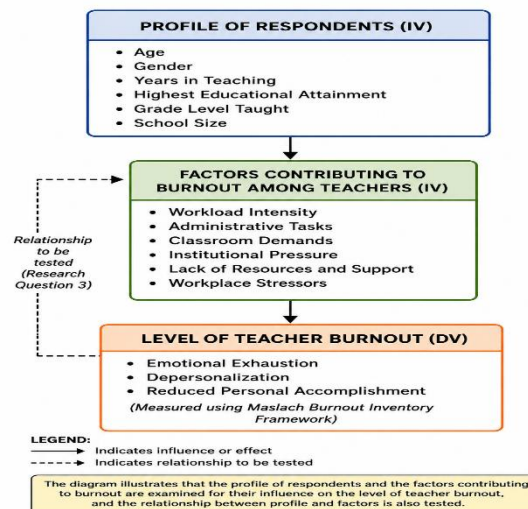


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of the Study

Figure 1 presents the schematic diagram of the study, illustrating the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable in examining teacher burnout among public school teachers in the Department of Education (Philippines). The framework is designed to show how the profile of respondents and the factors contributing to burnout influence the level of teacher burnout experienced by educators within the study area.

The first box represents the first independent variable, which is the profile of respondents. This includes age, gender, years in teaching, highest educational attainment, grade level taught, and school size. These variables describe the demographic and professional characteristics of the teacher-respondents and are considered important factors that may influence their experiences, perceptions, and responses to workplace stress and burnout.

The second box represents the second independent variable, identified as the factors contributing to teacher burnout. These factors include workload intensity, administrative tasks, classroom demands, institutional pressure, lack of resources and support, and workplace stressors. These variables reflect the institutional and environmental conditions that teachers encounter in their professional responsibilities. The framework assumes that increased exposure to these stressors may contribute to higher levels of burnout among teachers.

The third box represents the dependent variable, which is the level of teacher burnout. Burnout is measured through the dimensions identified in the Maslach Burnout Theory, namely emotional exhaustion,

depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of fatigue and emotional depletion caused by prolonged stress. Depersonalization pertains to the development of detached or negative attitudes toward work and students, while reduced personal accomplishment reflects declining feelings of competence and professional effectiveness.

The arrows in the diagram indicate the direction of influence and relationship among the variables. The solid arrows show that the profile of respondents and the identified burnout-related factors are assumed to affect the level of teacher burnout. Meanwhile, the broken arrow signifies the significant relationship to be tested in the study, particularly between the respondents' profile and the factors contributing to burnout.

METHODS

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to systematically examine the variables associated with teacher burnout and their implications for professional well-being and retention. This design was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to describe the existing level of burnout among teachers while also determining the relationships between demographic characteristics and burnout-related factors without manipulating any variables. Quantitative descriptive research is widely used in educational studies to provide measurable and objective descriptions of current conditions, whereas the correlational component enables the identification of significant associations among variables. Through this approach, the study was able to objectively assess burnout levels and determine whether teachers' professional profiles were significantly related to the factors contributing to burnout.

To obtain comprehensive and representative data, the study utilized universal sampling. All 135 public elementary school teachers officially assigned to the Tago 2 District served as respondents of the study. The use of total population sampling minimized sampling bias and ensured that the findings reflected the actual conditions experienced by teachers within the district. This approach also strengthened the reliability and contextual relevance of the results because every eligible teacher in the identified population was included in the investigation.

Data were gathered using a validated researcher-adapted questionnaire employing a 5-point Likert scale format. The instrument underwent content validation and reliability testing to ensure clarity, consistency, and appropriateness of the indicators used in measuring burnout-related variables. The questionnaire focused on five major dimensions of burnout, namely personal burnout, teaching-related burnout, student-related burnout, institutional burnout, and logistical burnout. The Likert scale enabled respondents to express varying degrees of agreement and experience regarding occupational stress and burnout conditions. In conducting the study, the researcher strictly observed ethical standards in educational research, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and the protection of participants' privacy throughout the data collection process.

After the retrieval of the questionnaires, the collected data were organized, tabulated, and statistically analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Frequency, Percentage, and Rank were utilized to summarize the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, years in teaching, highest educational attainment, grade level taught, and school size. These tools were also used to identify and rank the primary factors contributing to teacher burnout among public elementary school teachers in Tago II District. To determine the level of burnout across the identified dimensions, Mean and Standard Deviation were employed. The weighted mean measured the average responses of the participants regarding personal burnout, teaching-related burnout, student-related burnout, institutional burnout, and logistical burnout, while the standard deviation assessed the consistency and variability of responses within each category. The computed means were interpreted using a 5-point Likert scale verbal interpretation to classify the severity of burnout experienced by teachers. To address the third research problem, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was used to determine the significant relationship between the respondents' profile variables and the factors contributing to teacher

burnout. This statistical treatment measured the strength and direction of association between the identified variables. All statistical analyses were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance to ensure the reliability and validity of the study findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

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
School Size	Small school	97	71.85
	Medium	38	28.15
	Total	135	100

The predominance of young and mid-career teachers in Tago 2 District suggests increased vulnerability to burnout due to the pressures of career growth, high workload, and evolving role expectations. Research supports this pattern, with younger teachers and those in their first decade of service consistently reporting higher stress and burnout levels (Chen et al., 2022 ; Galanakis et al., 2020 ; Carroll et al., 2022). These challenges may stem from the gap between early-career enthusiasm and limited professional rewards or support. The dominance of female teachers in Tago 2 District reflects a broader gendered pattern in elementary education and raises important considerations about how gender roles may intersect with burnout. Agyapong et al. (2022), Padmanabhanunni and Pretorius (2023), Kollerová et al. (2023), and Souza et al. (2023) all found that female teachers reported significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, identifying gender as a key predictor of burnout.

Further, the finding that most teachers had over four years of experience suggests a relatively stable yet potentially stagnating workforce in Tago 2 District. The low representation in higher professional ranks points to limited promotion opportunities, which may contribute to growing dissatisfaction, burnout, and eventual departure. This aligns with Afif (2022), who noted that among various job factors, promotion prospects ranked lowest in satisfaction among elementary teachers. The data reflect a generally balanced distribution across grade levels, though with a slight concentration in upper elementary grades. This pattern may have implications for teacher stress, as recent findings suggest a negative relationship between grade level and stress teachers of older students tend to report higher stress levels (Junker, 2023). The scarcity of

multigrade teachers also indicates that most educators in Tago 2 handle single-grade classrooms, yet those assigned to upper levels may still face increased demands due to curriculum complexity, student behavior, and academic expectations. This may partly explain elevated stress and burnout risk among teachers in these grade levels within the district, if any. Finally, the overwhelming concentration of teachers in small schools underscores the rural character of Tago 2 District, where resource scarcity and professional isolation likely shape teacher experiences. Such contexts often involve limited instructional materials, heavier workloads, and fewer support systems conditions strongly linked to teacher attrition in rural settings (Dlamini et al., 2022).

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

The statistical summary of factors contributing to burnout reveals an overall mean of 3.18 (SD=0.54), which indicates that teachers in the Tago 2 District are operating under a state of moderate professional exhaustion. This score suggests that while teachers have not yet reached a state of total professional collapse, they are experiencing a "persistent erosion" of their motivation and energy levels. Specifically, Institutional Burnout (M=3.30) emerged as the most critical stressor, driven primarily by excessive administrative workloads, non-teaching duties, and unpredictable policy shifts. This finding is corroborated by Xie et al. (2022), who observed that in modern educational systems, "administrative creep" the gradual expansion of clerical expectations often supersedes actual classroom instruction as a primary source of stress. This is closely followed by Logistical Burnout (M=3.26), which reflects the physical and financial strain caused by resource limitations and facility gaps. The fact that institutional and logistical factors scored higher than student-related burnout suggests that the "system" itself is more taxing than the students being taught. As Turner and Garvis (2023) emphasize, when job demands (paperwork and lack of resources) consistently outweigh job resources (support and autonomy), burnout becomes an inevitable occupational hazard.

The implications of these findings are profound for the Department of Education's operational strategy. The high level of Institutional Burnout implies that existing efforts to streamline documentation may not be effectively felt at the district level, leading to a "compliance-over-competence" culture. This creates a significant risk where teachers may prioritize meeting bureaucratic deadlines over student learning outcomes, ultimately compromising the quality of education in the district. Furthermore, the prominence of Logistical Burnout implies that teachers are likely utilizing personal resources both financial and emotional to bridge gaps in school facilities, a practice that is unsustainable in the long term. If these systemic stressors are not mitigated through workload optimization and improved resource allocation, the district faces an increased risk of "quiet quitting" or outright resignation. Therefore, the data serves as a call for institutional reform that prioritizes the reduction of non-teaching tasks and provides a more robust organizational support framework to safeguard teacher well-being and instructional focus.

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
Highest Educational Attainment	Logistical Burnout	0.182	0.035	Significant
	Personal Burnout	0.128	0.139	Not significant
	Teaching Burnout	0.123	0.158	Not significant
	Student Burnout	0.085	0.324	Not significant
Position / Rank	Institutional Burnout	0.084	0.335	Not significant
	Logistical Burnout	0.031	0.723	Not significant
	Personal Burnout	0.044	0.613	Not significant
	Teaching Burnout	-0.014	0.876	Not significant
Grade level Taught	Student Burnout	0.007	0.94	Not significant
	Institutional Burnout	0.013	0.885	Not significant
	Logistical Burnout	0.019	0.823	Not significant
	Personal Burnout	-0.136	0.117	Not significant
School size	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

The inferential analysis conducted through Pearson Product-Moment Correlation reveals that burnout in the Tago 2 District is a predictable outcome of systemic school environments rather than a result of individual demographic traits. While variables such as age, gender, and educational attainment showed no significant impact on burnout levels ($p > 0.05$), years in service ($r=0.179$, $p=0.038$) and school size ($r=0.182$, $p=0.035$) were identified as significant predictors of professional exhaustion. These findings align with recent scholarship by Turner and Garvis (2023), who argue that burnout is a cumulative "erosion of the soul" that intensifies as educators are exposed to high-demand, low-resource settings over extended periods. This suggests that the longer a teacher remains within the current institutional framework, the more susceptible they become to chronic depletion. Furthermore, the correlation with school size is consistent with the observations of Xie et al. (2022), who noted that larger institutional settings often impose higher bureaucratic complexity and increased student-management pressures, leading to greater psychological strain.

The implications of these significant relationships are critical for the Department of Education's retention strategies, as they shift the focus from personal resilience to institutional responsibility. The significant link between tenure and burnout implies a high risk of "brain drain," where the district's most experienced mentors and instructional leaders are the most likely to reach a breaking point and exit the profession. This cumulative effect necessitates the implementation of specialized "wellness sabbaticals" or career-stage-specific support for veteran teachers to prevent the loss of valuable human capital. Additionally, the relationship between school size and burnout implies that the current administrative staffing model is insufficient for Mega or Large schools. To mitigate this environmental strain, the district must move beyond flat resource distribution and instead provide increased administrative assistance and localized support frameworks to schools with high enrollment. Ultimately, these results confirm that addressing teacher attrition requires data-driven institutional reforms that actively reduce the "wear and tear" experienced by teachers as they progress through their careers.

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 demographic and professional profile reveals that teachers in Tago 2 District are at heightened risk of burnout, particularly those in the early to middle stages of their careers, those assigned to upper

elementary levels, and those working in rural schools with limited resources and professional growth opportunities. These conditions create a structural disadvantage that can intensify work-related stress, limit career progression, and weaken long-term retention in the DepEd system.

The higher prevalence of institutional burnout compared to teaching burnout indicates that systemic and organizational factors, rather than classroom teaching itself, exert the greatest strain on teachers. While instructional dedication remains relatively intact, sustained exposure to institutional stressors without adequate support is likely to escalate burnout, reduce engagement, and increase attrition risks.

The strong link between years of service and burnout suggests that cumulative exposure to workload demands, repetitive stressors, and limited career progression erodes resilience over time. Additionally, the higher personal burnout in larger schools reflects the strain caused by heavier class loads and administrative demands. The absence of significant correlations for other profile variables implies that burnout affects teachers broadly, regardless of demographic differences.

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