

OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS AND COPING MECHANISMS AMONG TEACHERS OF MUSIC, ARTS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

ANGELI GRACE A. MACARAEG

Master of Arts in Education
Major in MAPEH

Abstract

The teaching profession has become increasingly demanding, exposing educators to multiple occupational stressors that may affect their coping capacity and overall well-being. This study examined the occupational stressors and coping mechanisms among Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) teachers in secondary schools during the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it determined the perceived severity of occupational stressors in terms of workload, student discipline, and administrative demands; assessed the frequency of coping mechanisms in terms of problem-focused, emotion-focused, and social-support strategies; examined the relationship between occupational stressors and coping mechanisms; and compared the well-being outcomes of teachers who frequently used adaptive coping mechanisms and those who used less adaptive strategies. The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design involving 40 MAPEH teachers from Dagupan City National High School and Moncada National High School. Data were gathered through a structured survey questionnaire and analyzed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and an independent samples t-test. Results showed that occupational stressors were generally high, with administrative demands and workload emerging as the most severe sources of stress. MAPEH teachers frequently used coping mechanisms, with problem-focused coping as the most common strategy. A significant moderate positive correlation was found between occupational stressors and coping mechanisms. Moreover, teachers who frequently used adaptive coping mechanisms demonstrated significantly higher levels of work balance and job satisfaction than those who used less adaptive strategies. The findings underscore the importance of institutional support programs that reduce occupational stress and strengthen adaptive coping among MAPEH teachers.

Keywords: Occupational Stressors, Coping Mechanisms, MAPEH Teachers, Work Balance, Job Satisfaction, Secondary Schools

1. Introduction

The quality of schooling depends not only on curriculum coverage and instructional competence but also on the conditions under which teachers perform their work. Recent international evidence has made this point increasingly urgent. UNESCO reported that the world will need 44 million primary and secondary teachers by 2030, with secondary education accounting for a particularly large share of that need, underscoring the importance of retaining a healthy and effective teaching workforce (UNESCO, 2025). In the same vein, the OECD conceptualized teacher well-being as a multidimensional construct encompassing physical, mental, cognitive, subjective, and social dimensions, all of which are shaped by school- and system-level working conditions (OECD, 2020). Within this broader landscape, occupational stress has emerged as a major concern because sustained work pressure can undermine teacher motivation, satisfaction, and longevity in the profession (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021).

Educational research has consistently shown that teacher stress is not a vague or incidental experience; rather, it is tied to identifiable work demands. Workload, documentation, accountability pressures, lesson preparation, and classroom discipline repeatedly appear as

prominent stressors in the literature (Aloe et al., 2019; Pressley, 2021; Toropova et al., 2021). More recent OECD evidence is especially revealing: across participating education systems in TALIS 2024, general administrative work was the most frequently reported source of stress, cited by 52% of teachers, while excessive teaching load, lesson preparation, and classroom discipline also remained significant stressors (OECD, 2025). These findings suggest that teacher stress is produced not only by instruction itself but also by the accumulation of non-instructional and compliance-related demands that compete for time, energy, and professional focus.

These pressures become even more complex for teachers of Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH). Unlike single-focus academic subjects, MAPEH requires teachers to move across artistic performance, health instruction, psychomotor learning, and activity-based classroom management. This interdisciplinary and performance-oriented nature expands the scope of preparation, materials management, safety monitoring, rehearsal organization, and co-curricular supervision. Recent evidence from physical education research likewise indicates that PE-related teaching roles involve distinctive occupational pressures, including behavior management during active classes, extracurricular organization, and physically demanding instructional routines (Li et al., 2025). In practical terms, MAPEH teachers operate within a professional space where instructional complexity and logistical responsibility intersect, making them especially vulnerable to cumulative workplace strain.

At the same time, the consequences of occupational stress are mediated by how teachers cope with it. Contemporary stress research treats coping as a set of cognitive and behavioral responses mobilized when work demands are appraised as taxing or overwhelming. In the teaching profession, problem-focused coping strategies such as planning, prioritizing, and taking concrete action have been associated with stronger resilience and better professional functioning (Herman et al., 2020). Social-support coping has likewise been linked with greater morale and adaptability, particularly when colleagues and school leaders provide practical and emotional support (Collie et al., 2020). By contrast, emotion-focused coping may be helpful in some situations but produces more variable outcomes depending on context and frequency of use (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Recent evidence further shows that stress coping is closely tied to teachers' emotional health, reinforcing the view that coping is not peripheral but central to teacher well-being (Emeljanovas et al., 2023).

The policy environment in the Philippines further strengthens the relevance of examining teacher stress and coping. Republic Act No. 4670, or the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers, explicitly provides for regulated teaching hours and recognizes the need to protect teachers' working conditions; Section 13 states that teachers engaged in classroom instruction should not be required to render more than six hours of actual teaching daily, with additional teaching compensated accordingly (Republic of the Philippines, 1966). Republic Act No. 11036, or the Mental Health Act, also requires employers to develop appropriate mental health policies and programs, thereby extending workplace mental health responsibilities into institutional practice (Republic of the Philippines, 2018). Consistent with these legal principles, DepEd Order No. 005, s. 2024 was issued to rationalize teachers' workloads in public schools and address concerns about overload. Together, these measures show that teacher welfare is not merely a personal issue but a policy and organizational concern within the Philippine education system.

From a research standpoint, however, important gaps remain. Much of the literature still treats teachers as a relatively uniform occupational group, despite major differences in subject specialization, classroom ecology, and work demands. Systematic review evidence has affirmed that multiple interacting factors, including classroom management, school climate, and professional support, influence teacher occupational well-being. However, subject-specific analyses remain comparatively limited (Nwoko et al., 2023). This is especially problematic for MAPEH teachers, whose work combines artistic, athletic, and health-related responsibilities that are not fully captured in generalized teacher-stress models. Moreover, while some studies

examine stressors and others examine coping, fewer investigations integrate occupational stressors, coping mechanisms, and well-being outcomes within a single quantitative design. The need, therefore, is not only for more teacher well-being research but also for more differentiated, context-sensitive, and program-oriented inquiry.

This gap is particularly relevant in secondary schools where MAPEH teachers often carry multiple preparations and school-related responsibilities beyond regular classroom instruction. In the uploaded study, the rationale and scope identify workload, student discipline, and administrative demands as the focal occupational stressors, while problem-focused, emotion-focused, and social-support coping are treated as the principal coping mechanisms. The same study also frames work-life balance and job satisfaction as key well-being outcomes, signaling concern not only with stress exposure but also with the professional quality of teachers' daily lives. Such framing is methodologically sound because it allows the study to move from description to relationship testing and, ultimately, to the development of an institutional support program grounded in evidence rather than assumption.

Against this background, the present study examines the occupational stressors and coping mechanisms among MAPEH teachers in secondary schools during School Year 2025–2026, specifically in Dagupan City National High School and Moncada National High School. It seeks to determine the perceived severity of workload, student discipline, and administrative demands; assess the frequency of problem-focused, emotion-focused, and social-support coping; test the relationship between occupational stressors and coping mechanisms; and compare well-being outcomes in terms of work balance and job satisfaction between teachers who frequently use adaptive coping strategies and those who use less adaptive ones. In doing so, the study responds to a practical educational need and to a policy imperative recognized by WHO, which recommends organizational interventions that directly address workplace psychosocial risks and working conditions (World Health Organization, 2024). Thus, the investigation is positioned not only to describe a problem but also to inform institutional action for teacher well-being.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the occupational stressors and coping mechanisms among secondary school MAPEH teachers. The descriptive dimension was used to determine the mean perceived severity of occupational stressors in terms of workload, student discipline, and administrative demands, as well as the frequency of utilization of coping mechanisms classified as problem-focused, emotion-focused, and social-support strategies. The correlational component enabled the study to test the statistical relationship between occupational stressors and coping mechanisms. At the same time, the comparative aspect was applied to determine whether significant differences existed in self-reported well-being outcomes, particularly work balance and job satisfaction, between teachers who frequently utilized adaptive coping mechanisms and those who used less adaptive strategies. This design was appropriate because the study sought to generate numerical evidence from naturally occurring professional conditions without manipulating variables or introducing experimental treatment. Using a structured survey questionnaire, the investigation produced standardized data that were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, specifically the mean, standard deviation, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and an independent-samples t-test. As a cross-sectional and non-experimental inquiry, the design ensured objectivity, statistical rigor, and methodological alignment with the study's aim of generating evidence for a proposed institutional support program for MAPEH teachers.

2.2 Participants

The study was 40 licensed MAPEH teachers currently employed at two secondary schools during the first semester of School Year 2025–2026, namely Dagupan City National High School in Dagupan City, Pangasinan, and Moncada National High School in Moncada, Tarlac. Of the total respondents, 30 were from Dagupan City National High School, and 10 were from Moncada National High School. The participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study at the time of data collection. To ensure that the respondents possessed sufficient professional exposure to the variables under investigation, the study included only teachers who were actively handling at least one MAPEH component—Music, Arts, Physical Education, or Health—and who had rendered at least one year of teaching service. Excluded from the study were teachers not assigned to MAPEH during the specified academic year, administrative personnel without classroom teaching functions, substitute or part-time teachers with less than one year of experience, and individuals who failed to complete the survey instrument. This participant profile was considered appropriate because it ensured that the respondents had direct and sustained experience with the occupational stressors, coping mechanisms, and work-related well-being examined in the study, thereby strengthening the relevance and credibility of the data.

2.3 Instrumentation

The study used a structured, self-administered questionnaire as the principal research instrument to collect quantitative data from respondents. The instrument was designed to operationalize the major variables in the study, namely occupational stressors, coping mechanisms, and well-being outcomes among MAPEH teachers. It was organized into four major sections: the first gathered demographic information such as years of teaching experience and subject components handled; the second measured the perceived severity of occupational stressors in terms of workload, student discipline, and administrative demands; the third assessed the frequency of utilization of coping mechanisms categorized into problem-focused, emotion-focused, and social-support strategies; and the fourth measured self-reported well-being outcomes, specifically work balance and job satisfaction. All items were presented using Likert scales to ensure responses could be quantified and analyzed statistically. To establish content validity, the draft questionnaire was reviewed by experts in educational management, psychology, and research methodology, who evaluated its clarity, relevance, and alignment with the constructs under study. Their recommendations were incorporated through item revision and refinement of scale descriptors. The instrument was then pilot-tested among teachers who were not included in the final sample, and its reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded acceptable internal consistency. These procedures established the questionnaire as a valid, reliable, and appropriate instrument for measuring the variables investigated in the study.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data gathered in this study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to ensure an objective and systematic interpretation of the quantitative responses. After the retrieval of the completed questionnaires, each instrument was reviewed for completeness and consistency, and all valid responses were encoded into a statistical software program using numerical codes assigned to each response option for easier tabulation and computation. Descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation, were used to determine levels of occupational stressors, the frequency of coping mechanism use, and respondents' self-reported well-being outcomes. To test the study hypotheses, inferential statistical tools were likewise applied. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between perceived occupational stressors and coping mechanisms, and the independent-samples t-test was used to determine whether significant

differences existed in work-life balance and job satisfaction between teachers who frequently used adaptive coping mechanisms and those who used less adaptive strategies. These statistical procedures were appropriate because they allowed the study to describe the central tendencies of the measured variables, establish significant associations, and compare group outcomes with rigor and precision, thereby generating reliable empirical evidence for the proposed institutional support program.

3 Results

The results revealed that MAPEH teachers experienced occupational stressors at an overall high level, with an overall mean of 3.91. Among the dimensions measured, administrative demands registered the highest mean ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.45$), interpreted as very high, followed by workload ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.48$), interpreted as high. At the same time, student discipline obtained the lowest mean ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.62$), interpreted as moderate. These findings indicate that MAPEH teachers were most burdened not by classroom behavior concerns alone, but by the combined weight of compliance-related tasks, documentation, reporting requirements, and extensive teaching responsibilities. In the context of MAPEH, such demands are unsurprising, as the subject area requires the simultaneous management of theoretical instruction, performance-based assessment, practical demonstrations, and co-curricular activities. The findings suggest that the complexity of the MAPEH teaching role extends beyond classroom delivery and is significantly shaped by organizational and administrative expectations.

This pattern of results affirms the broader argument that teacher stress is often intensified by institutional workload structures rather than by instructional tasks alone. The very high rating for administrative demands suggests that teachers may be devoting substantial time and energy to paperwork, reports, and compliance functions that compete with preparation for actual teaching. Meanwhile, the high workload score reflects the multifaceted nature of MAPEH, where teachers often handle multiple components, prepare varied instructional materials, and supervise school-related events and practical activities. Although student discipline remained a relevant concern, its comparatively lower mean implies that classroom management challenges were less overwhelming than systemic workload pressures in the present setting. This interpretation is consistent with the study's own discussion, which found that administrative overload and instructional preparation together constituted the dominant sources of occupational strain among respondents.

Regarding coping mechanisms, the results showed that MAPEH teachers generally demonstrated a strong tendency to employ adaptive responses to stress, with an overall mean of 4.02, indicating they are frequently used. Among the three categories, problem-focused coping obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.38$), interpreted as very frequently used, followed by social-support coping ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.44$), interpreted as frequently used, and emotion-focused coping ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.52$), also interpreted as frequently used. These findings indicate that when confronted with work-related stressors, teachers were more likely to respond through planning, prioritizing tasks, reorganizing schedules, and seeking concrete solutions rather than relying primarily on internal emotional regulation. The relatively high use of social-support coping further suggests that collegial interaction, consultation, and interpersonal support played a meaningful role in helping teachers manage occupational pressures. Collectively, the results portray MAPEH teachers as professionally active and solution-oriented in responding to workplace stress.

The inferential analysis further demonstrated that occupational stressors and coping mechanisms were significantly related. It showed a significant, moderate positive correlation between occupational stressors and coping mechanisms ($r = 0.58$, $p = 0.002$), indicating that as perceived stress severity increased, teachers reported more frequent use of coping strategies. This result suggests that coping mechanisms were activated in response to

heightened occupational demands rather than functioning independently of them. In other words, teachers who experienced greater workload, administrative strain, and discipline-related pressures were also more likely to engage in problem-solving, emotional regulation, and support-seeking behaviors. The positive direction of the relationship implies that coping among these teachers was not absent under stress; rather, it intensified as professional demands became more pronounced. It should be noted, however, that the uploaded manuscript contains a minor inconsistency in the narrative sentence preceding Table 3, where a different correlation value is mentioned; the table itself reports $r = 0.58$, and this tabulated value was used here as the basis for interpretation.

Finally, the comparative results underscored the importance of adaptive coping for teacher well-being. Teachers who frequently used adaptive coping mechanisms reported higher mean scores in work balance ($M = 4.12$) and job satisfaction ($M = 4.35$) than those who used fewer adaptive strategies, whose mean scores were 2.85 and 3.10, respectively. These differences were confirmed by an independent-samples t -test, which showed statistically significant differences for work balance ($t = 5.42$, $p = 0.001$) and job satisfaction ($t = 6.81$, $p = 0.001$). These findings indicate that adaptive coping mechanisms served as protective factors, enhancing teachers' capacity to maintain equilibrium between professional and personal demands and to derive fulfillment from their work despite occupational stress. Substantively, the results support the view that while stress may be unavoidable in complex teaching environments, its negative effects can be moderated when teachers possess constructive coping resources. This empirical pattern also justifies the proposed institutional support program in the study, particularly its emphasis on workload rationalization, administrative streamlining, peer-support structures, and professional development on stress management.

4. Discussion

The present study found that occupational stressors among MAPEH teachers were generally high, with workload and administrative demands emerging as the most pronounced sources of strain. At the same time, student discipline was rated at a comparatively lower level. This pattern is strongly corroborated by international evidence showing that excessive workload and administrative responsibilities are among the most persistent stressors in teaching. OECD data from TALIS 2024 showed that administrative work was the most frequently cited source of stress across participating education systems, with lesson preparation, teaching load, and classroom discipline also ranking prominently among teachers' reported pressures. Likewise, Hascher and Waber's systematic review concluded that teacher well-being is deeply affected by organizational demands, workload accumulation, and school-based stress conditions rather than by instructional tasks alone. The convergence between the present findings and these studies suggests that the stress experienced by MAPEH teachers is not isolated or incidental; rather, it reflects a broader structural pattern in which institutional expectations and compliance-related tasks substantially shape teachers' work lives.

The finding that workload constitutes a major source of occupational stress is particularly consistent with the literature on subject areas that require performance-based, activity-oriented, and multifaceted instructional responsibilities. Research on physical education teachers, whose professional demands overlap with several components of MAPEH teaching, has shown that occupational stress is positively associated with burnout and emotional strain, especially when teachers face high-intensity instructional expectations and frequent task switching. Li et al. found a robust positive relationship between occupational stress and burnout among primary and secondary school physical education teachers, highlighting the psychological costs of sustained professional pressure. This corroborates the present study because MAPEH teachers, like PE teachers, often operate in learning environments that require simultaneous management of content delivery, student movement, performance assessment, and event-related obligations.

The implication is that the elevated stress observed in the current study may stem not only from the volume of work but also from the complex, interdisciplinary nature of the subject area.

The study further revealed that MAPEH teachers frequently used coping mechanisms, with problem-focused coping registering the highest level, followed by social-support coping. This finding aligns closely with prior evidence that adaptive coping strategies are more common among teachers who remain functionally engaged under stress. Emeljanova et al. reported that coping strategies are meaningfully associated with teachers' emotional health and that more constructive coping patterns are associated with better psychological functioning. Relatedly, the literature on physical education teachers has shown that coping strategies play an important mediating role in the stress-burnout process, with more adaptive and self-regulatory responses linked to healthier professional functioning. These findings support the interpretation that the respondents in the present study did not passively absorb occupational stress; instead, they actively responded through planning, organization, and support-seeking. The high use of problem-focused coping in particular suggests professional resilience and a tendency toward action-oriented adaptation in the face of work demands.

The significant positive relationship found between occupational stressors and coping mechanisms in the present study is likewise corroborated by existing research. Rather than suggesting that coping eliminates stress, this positive association indicates that teachers activate coping responses more frequently when stress intensifies. Emeljanovas et al. similarly found meaningful relationships between stress coping and teachers' emotional health, indicating that coping is part of the response system teachers mobilize under demanding conditions. From a broader theoretical perspective, research grounded in the Job Demands-Resources framework has shown that teacher job demands and job resources jointly shape well-being, work engagement, and retention-related outcomes. Admiraal et al. found that distress and barriers to professional development function as major job demands, while collaborative and participative school culture serve as vital resources linked to stronger professional outcomes. In this light, the correlation found in the present study is consistent with the view that coping mechanisms are not detached from workplace pressures; they are dynamic responses triggered by the intensity of those pressures and shaped by the resources available in the school environment.

Finally, the study's finding that teachers who frequently used adaptive coping mechanisms reported significantly better work balance and job satisfaction is well supported by the literature. Toropova et al. demonstrated that teacher job satisfaction is strongly associated with school working conditions, indicating that the quality of teachers' professional environments and their ability to manage job demands are central to satisfaction. More recent international evidence likewise shows that job demands and resources have a decisive influence on teachers' satisfaction with both the profession and their school career. In addition, a systematic review by Dreer found that teacher well-being is significantly linked with desirable professional outcomes, including retention-related and school-functioning variables. Taken together, these studies reinforce the current finding that adaptive coping serves as a protective factor. The significant differences in work-life balance and job satisfaction observed in the present study, therefore, support a practical conclusion: when teachers are equipped with effective coping strategies and supported by healthier working conditions, they are more likely to sustain professional satisfaction and psychological equilibrium despite occupational stress.

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