

OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS, BURNOUT AND COPING MECHANISM AMONG MUSIC, ARTS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, AND HEALTH TEACHERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health teachers in secondary schools continue to encounter demanding instructional, behavioral, and administrative conditions that may heighten occupational stress and contribute to burnout. This study examined the occupational stressors, burnout levels, and coping mechanisms of MAPEH teachers at Mangaldan National High School during the 2025–2026 academic year. Specifically, it determined the extent of perceived occupational stressors in terms of workload, student discipline, and administrative demands; assessed burnout in terms of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion; identified coping mechanisms categorized as problem-focused, emotion-focused, and social support; and tested the relationships between stressors, coping mechanisms, and burnout. The study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design and used a total enumeration of 30 MAPEH teachers. Data were gathered through a structured Likert-scale survey questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation coefficient. Findings revealed that MAPEH teachers experienced high occupational stress, with workload as the most prominent stressor. Burnout was also high, particularly in emotional and mental exhaustion, indicating that sustained work demands affected teachers' well-being. The respondents frequently used coping mechanisms, with problem-focused coping as the most utilized strategy. Correlational results showed a significant positive relationship between occupational stressors and burnout, while coping mechanisms had a significant negative relationship with burnout. Based on the findings, the study proposed a teacher-focused intervention plan to reduce stress, strengthen coping resources, and promote teacher well-being. The results underscore the need for institutional support, balanced workload distribution, wellness programs, and peer-based assistance for sustainable MAPEH teaching practice settings.

Keywords: Occupational Stressors, Burnout, Coping Mechanisms, MAPEH Teachers, Teacher Well-Being, Intervention Plan

1. Introduction

Teaching has become an increasingly demanding profession as educators are expected to perform instructional, assessment, classroom management, administrative, and psychosocial support roles within complex school environments. In secondary schools, these demands are especially evident among Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) teachers because their work involves both cognitive and performance-based instruction. Unlike subjects that are largely classroom-textual in delivery, MAPEH requires teachers to manage physically active learning spaces, guide students in artistic and movement-based outputs, maintain safety during activities, assess performances, and prepare instructional materials suited to diverse learning tasks. These responsibilities may expose teachers to multiple occupational stressors that can affect their professional functioning and overall well-being.

Occupational stress among teachers is commonly associated with workload, student behavior, administrative requirements, time pressure, and lack of institutional support. Recent literature has shown that teacher stress is not an isolated emotional condition but a work-related

experience shaped by organizational demands, classroom realities, and available coping resources. Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, and Reinke (2020) emphasized that teacher stress and coping patterns are linked to burnout, self-efficacy, and student-related outcomes, suggesting that teacher well-being has implications not only for educators but also for classroom engagement quality. Similarly, Herman and colleagues (2020) argued through the Coping-Competence-Context framework that teacher stress must be understood through interconnected pathways involving personal coping capacity, professional competence, and contextual demands. These perspectives highlight the importance of examining stress within a wider school system rather than as an individual weakness.

Burnout is one of the most serious outcomes of prolonged occupational stress. It is commonly reflected in emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, mental strain, detachment, and reduced professional motivation. In teaching, burnout may diminish instructional effectiveness, weaken teacher-student relationships, reduce enthusiasm, and contribute to absenteeism or intent to leave the profession. The World Health Organization (2022) underscores the importance of mental health at work and recommends organizational, managerial, and individual interventions to protect workers from psychosocial risks and support their participation and productivity. For teachers, these recommendations are highly relevant because education systems depend on emotionally resilient and professionally supported educators. When teachers experience sustained stress without adequate coping mechanisms or institutional support, burnout can become a persistent barrier to instructional quality and teacher retention.

The post-pandemic period further intensified the relevance of teacher well-being. UNESCO, UNICEF, and Education International (2021) noted that teachers were central to education recovery but also faced difficult working conditions, rapid adaptation to remote and hybrid modalities, learning loss recovery, and health and safety concerns. Although schools have returned to more regular operations, many of the demands placed on teachers have continued, including expanded documentation, remediation, student support, and administrative compliance. In the Philippine context, the Department of Education has recognized workload concerns through policies aimed at maximizing teachers' time for classroom teaching and removing administrative tasks from public school teachers. DepEd Order No. 005, s. 2024 rationalized teachers' workload by defining actual classroom teaching hours and teaching-related ancillary tasks, while emphasizing the delegation of non-teaching administrative duties to appropriate personnel. These policy developments demonstrate that teacher workload and well-being are not merely personal concerns but institutional and system-level priorities.

MAPEH teachers may be particularly vulnerable to stress because of the distinct nature of their subject area. Music and Arts teachers may face performance preparation, limited materials, student output evaluation, and program-related expectations. Physical Education teachers must manage safety, discipline, space, equipment, and physical activity participation. Health teachers are expected to address wellness-related content that may require sensitivity, accuracy, and learner engagement. When these subject demands are combined with paperwork, school programs, extracurricular assignments, and student discipline concerns, the resulting work environment may increase the risk of burnout. However, teachers are not passive recipients of stress. They employ coping mechanisms that may either reduce or intensify burnout depending on their effectiveness and appropriateness.

Coping mechanisms generally include problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and social support. Problem-focused coping involves direct actions to manage the source of stress, such as planning, prioritizing, time management, and problem-solving. Emotion-focused coping involves regulating emotional responses through acceptance, relaxation, reframing, or personal reflection. Social support refers to seeking assistance, encouragement, advice, or emotional connection from colleagues, administrators, family members, or friends. Research on teacher stress profiles indicates that teachers with high stress but low coping tend to exhibit

greater burnout and less favorable professional outcomes than those with stronger coping resources (Herman et al., 2020). Thus, understanding the coping practices of MAPEH teachers is necessary in designing interventions that are responsive to their actual working conditions.

Despite increasing scholarly attention to teacher stress and burnout, there remains a need for localized studies focusing on subject-specific teacher groups such as MAPEH teachers. Many studies examine teachers in general, but fewer address the combined influence of workload, student discipline, administrative demands, burnout, and coping mechanisms within performance-based teaching areas. This gap is important because intervention plans are more effective when they are grounded in the lived occupational realities of the specific teacher group they intend to support. Accordingly, the present study examined the occupational stressors, level of burnout, and coping mechanisms of MAPEH teachers at Mangaldan National High School during the academic year 2025–2026. Specifically, it assessed stressors in terms of workload, student discipline, and administrative demands; determined burnout in terms of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion; identified coping mechanisms in terms of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and social support; and tested the relationships among these variables. The findings served as the basis for proposing a teacher-focused intervention plan to promote well-being and reduce burnout among MAPEH teachers.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design to examine occupational stressors, burnout levels, and coping mechanisms among MAPEH teachers in secondary schools. The descriptive component was used to determine the extent of occupational stressors experienced by the respondents in terms of workload, student discipline, and administrative demands; the level of burnout in terms of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion; and the coping mechanisms utilized in terms of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and social support. The correlational component was used to determine the degree and direction of associations between occupational stressors and burnout, and between coping mechanisms and burnout, without manipulating variables or introducing an intervention. A cross-sectional approach was used because data were collected from respondents at a single point in time during the academic year 2025–2026, allowing the study to capture the prevailing conditions and relationships among the variables within the selected school context. This design was appropriate because the study aimed to generate empirical evidence that could serve as the basis for a teacher-focused intervention plan to promote well-being and reduce burnout among MAPEH teachers.

2.2 Participants

The study was conducted with the MAPEH teacher, 30, from High School during the academic year 2025–2026. Total enumeration sampling was employed because the population of MAPEH teachers in the selected locale was manageable and all eligible teachers could be included as respondents. The participants were teachers actively handling Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health subjects at the time of data collection, thereby ensuring that the information obtained reflected direct experiences with the occupational demands of MAPEH instruction. Teachers who were on extended leave, assigned exclusively to administrative functions, or not teaching MAPEH classes during the data-gathering period were excluded from the study. This participant selection was appropriate because the study required respondents who were directly exposed to workload demands, student discipline concerns, administrative responsibilities, burnout experiences, and coping practices within the MAPEH teaching context. By including all eligible MAPEH teachers in the school, the study generated a comprehensive, context-specific

profile of occupational stressors, burnout levels, and coping mechanisms as a basis for developing a teacher-focused intervention plan.

2.3 Instrumentation

The primary instrument used in the study was a structured survey questionnaire designed to gather quantitative data on occupational stressors, burnout levels, and coping mechanisms among MAPEH teachers. The questionnaire was developed based on the Statement of the Problem and relevant literature on teacher stress, burnout, and coping strategies to ensure alignment with the study variables. It was organized into four parts: the first part measured perceived occupational stressors in terms of workload, student discipline, and administrative demands; the second part assessed burnout in terms of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion; the third part determined coping mechanisms categorized as problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and social support; and the fourth part gathered demographic information such as age, sex, educational attainment, teaching experience, teaching load, and area of specialization. The items were constructed using a Likert-type scale, allowing respondents to indicate the extent of their agreement or the frequency of their experience with each statement. Prior to administration, the questionnaire was reviewed by the research adviser and subject experts to assess content validity, clarity, appropriateness, and consistency with the study's objectives. The use of this structured instrument enabled systematic measurement and statistical analysis of the variables necessary for developing a teacher-focused intervention plan.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data gathered from the structured survey questionnaire were organized, coded, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures aligned with the study's objectives. Descriptive statistics, particularly frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and overall mean, were used to determine the extent of occupational stressors experienced by MAPEH teachers in terms of workload, student discipline, and administrative demands; the level of burnout in terms of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion; and the coping mechanisms utilized in terms of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and social support. The computed means were interpreted using the prescribed Likert-scale descriptors to describe the level or extent of each variable. To examine the relationships among the major variables, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine whether significant associations existed between occupational stressors and burnout, and between coping mechanisms and burnout. The hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. This analytical procedure enabled the study to describe the prevailing conditions among MAPEH teachers and to establish a statistical basis for developing a teacher-focused intervention plan to reduce burnout and strengthen coping resources.

3 Results

The results revealed that MAPEH teachers experienced occupational stress to a high extent, with an overall mean of 3.65. Among the identified occupational stressors, workload had the highest mean of 3.78, followed by student discipline (3.62) and administrative demands (3.55). These findings indicate that the respondents perceived their teaching and non-teaching responsibilities as major sources of stress. The result further suggests that MAPEH teachers are affected not only by classroom instruction but also by the preparation of learning materials, assessment of performance-based outputs, management of active learners, participation in school activities, and compliance with administrative requirements.

The study also found that respondents experienced high levels of burnout, with an overall mean of 3.59. Emotional exhaustion had the highest mean of 3.70, followed by mental exhaustion (3.60) and physical exhaustion (3.48). This result indicates that the continuous exposure of

MAPEH teachers to work-related demands contributed to feelings of emotional strain, mental fatigue, and physical tiredness. The finding implies that burnout among MAPEH teachers is not limited to physical fatigue but also involves psychological and emotional depletion, which may affect motivation, instructional performance, and overall professional well-being.

The relationship between occupational stressors and burnout showed a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.69$). This result indicates that as occupational stressors increased, burnout among MAPEH teachers also increased. The finding supports the assumption that workload, student discipline concerns, and administrative demands are closely associated with emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion. It further implies that when stressors are inadequately managed or reduced, teachers may become more vulnerable to burnout, which can negatively affect their teaching effectiveness, professional satisfaction, and capacity to sustain quality instruction.

Regarding coping mechanisms, the respondents reported high utilization, with an overall mean of 3.75. Problem-focused coping had the highest mean of 3.85, followed by social support (3.72) and emotion-focused coping (3.68). These results suggest that MAPEH teachers commonly address stress by planning tasks, managing time, solving work-related problems, seeking support from colleagues or family, and regulating their emotional responses. The dominance of problem-focused coping indicates that the respondents tended to manage stress by directly addressing its sources rather than relying solely on emotional adjustment.

The relationship between coping mechanisms and burnout showed a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.63$). This means that as the use of coping mechanisms increased, the level of burnout decreased. The finding highlights the protective role of effective coping strategies in reducing the negative impact of occupational stress. It also suggests that teachers who actively use problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and social support may be better able to manage professional demands and maintain psychological well-being. Taken together, the findings provide a strong basis for developing a teacher-focused intervention plan that addresses workload concerns, strengthens coping resources, promotes peer support, and reduces burnout among MAPEH teachers.

4. Discussion

The finding that MAPEH teachers experienced a high level of occupational stress corroborates the existing literature, which shows that teachers are increasingly exposed to work-related demands that extend beyond classroom instruction. In the present study, workload emerged as the most prominent stressor, followed by student discipline and administrative demands. This result is consistent with Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, and Reinke (2020), who emphasized that teacher stress is shaped by classroom demands, professional responsibilities, coping resources, and school context. For MAPEH teachers, stress may be intensified because their subject area requires performance-based instruction, movement-oriented activities, preparation of varied learning materials, assessment of practical outputs, and maintenance of safety during active classes. The high stress level reported in the study therefore reflects the complex nature of MAPEH teaching, in which instructional responsibilities are combined with behavioral management and administrative compliance.

The high level of burnout among the respondents, particularly in emotional and mental exhaustion, further supports the assumption that prolonged exposure to occupational stress can weaken teacher well-being. Burnout is commonly associated with sustained emotional strain, mental fatigue, reduced motivation, and diminished professional functioning. The World Health Organization (2022) emphasizes that workplaces should address psychosocial risks through organizational, managerial, and individual interventions to protect mental health and promote productivity. In the context of the present study, the high burnout level suggests that MAPEH teachers may be vulnerable to emotional depletion when workload, student discipline issues, and

administrative demands remain continuous and insufficiently managed. This finding highlights the need for school-level systems that recognize burnout not as an individual weakness but as an occupational concern that requires an institutional response.

The significant positive relationship between occupational stressors and burnout confirms that higher exposure to work-related stress is associated with higher levels of teacher burnout. This result aligns with the teacher well-being literature, which consistently identifies excessive workload, classroom management problems, and organizational pressure as predictors of burnout. The finding also supports the Department of Education's policy direction, which issued workload rationalization measures to allow teachers to devote more time to classroom teaching and to clarify teaching-related and non-teaching tasks (Department of Education, 2024). In this regard, the study provides local empirical support for workload-management initiatives, particularly for MAPEH teachers whose duties often include teaching, coaching, event preparation, performance assessment, and participation in school programs. Reducing unnecessary administrative burdens may therefore help lessen burnout risk and improve teachers' capacity to deliver quality instruction.

The finding that MAPEH teachers frequently used coping mechanisms, with problem-focused coping as the most utilized strategy, indicates that the respondents actively attempted to manage the sources of their stress. Problem-focused coping, such as planning, prioritizing tasks, managing time, and solving work-related problems, is generally considered adaptive because it directly addresses stressors. Emotion-focused coping and social support remain important because they help teachers regulate their emotions and draw strength from colleagues, family members, and school leaders. UNESCO, UNICEF, and Education International (2021) stressed that teachers are central to education recovery and must be supported through policies and systems that protect their professional and personal well-being. The present result suggests that while teachers possess coping capacity, such capacity should be strengthened through structured wellness programs, peer-support systems, mentoring, and accessible psychosocial assistance.

Finally, the significant negative relationship between coping mechanisms and burnout demonstrates the protective role of effective coping strategies in sustaining teacher well-being. As the use of coping mechanisms increased, burnout decreased, suggesting that teachers who manage stress through problem-solving, emotional regulation, and social support are more likely to withstand occupational demands. This finding supports the development of a teacher-focused intervention plan that addresses both reducing stressors and strengthening coping resources. Such an intervention may include workload review, stress management training, peer support groups, counseling referral systems, time management workshops, and administrator-led support mechanisms. Overall, the findings confirm that reducing burnout among MAPEH teachers requires a balanced approach: schools must lessen avoidable stressors while also empowering teachers with practical, emotional, and social coping strategies.

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