

STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN THE DIVISION OF ZAMBALES

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ABSTRACT: The study examined at how elementary school teachers in the Division of Zambales balanced their personal and professional responsibilities throughout the academic year 2025-2026. The study's investigation into the relationship between work-life balance and stress management measures revealed a workforce that is both resilient and overworked. The findings show that these teachers work under a lot of stress, which is mostly caused by academic problems with students, a lot of deadlines, and the difficulty of juggling family responsibilities. Their work-life balance is characterized by a clear paradox: whereas professional accomplishments offer profound personal gratification, job pressures often interfere with their personal time, diminishing their sense of control. Teachers are very proactive in handling these demands, mostly depending on Spiritual/Personal Growth and Social Support. Teachers naturally employ these coping mechanisms more as job pressure increases, according to the study's direct correlation. Stress levels, however, differ greatly depending on the number of subjects taught and the particular grade level. According to the study, teachers are still in a state of reactive survival even though they are highly adaptive. The systemic impacts of administrative overloads and student-related stresses cannot be mitigated by personal resilience and spiritual development. Institutional support should take the place of individual coping. Additionally, a comprehensive action plan with an emphasis on equitable workloads and mental health was created, backed by less paperwork and protected personal time.

KEYWORDS: *stress management, work-life balance, quantitative descriptive, elementary teachers, Zambales*

I. INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession's role as a cornerstone of social development is increasingly compromised by the escalating complexity of the modern classroom. As Sharma (2018) and Carroll et al. (2022) observe, educators are no longer just instructors; they must navigate a dense thicket of administrative mandates, diverse learner profiles, and high-stakes parental expectations. These multifaceted demands often bleed into personal time, blurring professional boundaries and triggering a cycle of chronic stress and burnout (Zhao et al., 2022).

At the heart of this struggle is the pursuit of work-life balance—a state of equilibrium where professional and personal responsibilities are managed without mutual interference (Steffens et al., 2023). Maintaining this balance is not merely a personal luxury but a professional necessity, directly linked to job satisfaction and psychological health. When this equilibrium fails, the resulting role conflict and emotional exhaustion do not only harm the teacher; they lead to a measurable decline in instructional quality and student outcomes (Maristya & Nurhayati, 2022; Ranson, 2022). Conversely, teachers who achieve a stable balance demonstrate higher levels of resilience and classroom effectiveness (Landolfi et al., 2021; Nwoko et al., 2023).

This systemic issue is particularly acute in the Philippines, specifically among elementary educators in Zone 3, Division of Zambales. In this region, the universal challenges of teaching are compounded by localized stressors: resource-limited environments, high student-to-teacher ratios, and an influx of non-instructional duties that drain emotional reserves.

In response to these challenges, stress-management techniques have emerged as critical lifelines. Techniques such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), and gratitude-based happiness programs have gained traction for their ability to enhance psychological resilience (Liu & Xie, 2025; Valosek et al., 2021). Research by Hwang et al. (2019) and San Juan and Centeno (2021) confirms that such practices, alongside peer support networks, empower teachers to regulate their emotions and re-establish professional boundaries.

Despite the documented success of these interventions globally, a significant gap remains in understanding their efficacy within the specific cultural and institutional framework of rural Philippine divisions. While general strategies mitigate burnout, the direct relationship between targeted stress-management and sustained work–life equilibrium in localized contexts like Zambales remains underexplored. Addressing this gap is essential for moving beyond "one-size-fits-all" solutions and developing context-sensitive wellness programs that ensure teacher retention and, ultimately, the academic success of the Filipino learner.

This study aimed to investigate the stress management techniques and the work-life balance of elementary teachers in the division of Zambales. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research objectives: to assess the common stressors encountered by elementary teachers in the Division of Zambales in terms of workload and time pressure, student-related stressors, professional and organizational factors, and personal and social stressors; to assess the teachers' ability to maintain work–life balance in terms of work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work, and work-life enhancement; to determine what stress management techniques are practiced by the teachers to overcome these stressors as to time and work management, relaxation and physical well-being, cognitive and emotional strategies, social support, and spiritual and personal growth; to determine the significant relationship between the common stressors encountered and the stress management techniques that impact the teachers' ability to maintain work-life balance of elementary teachers; and to determine the significant relationship between the work-life balance and the stress management techniques that impact the teachers' ability to maintain work-life balance among elementary teachers in the Division of Zambales.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a descriptive–correlational research design to determine the stress management techniques on the work–life balance of elementary teachers in the division of Zambales. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), descriptive research seeks to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. It does not answer questions about how, when, or why the characteristics occurred, but rather what the characteristics are. Similarly, Bhat (2023) explains that descriptive research is a method used to gather quantifiable information that can be used to statistically analyze a target audience or a particular subject.

This design was appropriate for the study because it enabled the researcher to describe the teachers' demographic profile, identify the common stressors they encounter, determine the stress management techniques they practice, and assess their level of work–life balance. It also allowed for the analysis of whether a significant relationship exists between stress management techniques and work–life balance. The design provided a framework for understanding how teachers' stress management techniques such as time management, relaxation, mindfulness, and social support contribute to maintaining equilibrium between professional obligations and personal life. As Creswell (2018) emphasized, correlational designs were useful in education-related research when examining relationships between naturally occurring variables to inform practical interventions.

Thus, the descriptive–correlational design served as a suitable methodological approach for this study, providing both a descriptive overview and an analytical basis for developing recommendations and possible intervention strategies to enhance the work–life balance and well-being of elementary teachers of the Division of Zambales.

The respondents of the study were the elementary school teachers in the Division of Zambales, which includes several public elementary schools. The selection of schools as the research locale was based on its accessibility, the diversity of teacher demographics, and the observed challenges teachers face in managing stress and maintaining work–life balance. The study specifically focused on teachers who have been in service for at least one year to ensure that the respondents possess adequate teaching experience and familiarity with the demands of the profession.

The sample of 172 teachers was finalized through simple random sampling, a probability-based technique chosen to eliminate selection bias and ensure that the findings are an objective representation of the broader population. This approach allowed for a balanced distribution across key demographic. By engaging this specific cohort, the study garnered nuanced insights into the stressors unique to the elementary level, the efficacy of the stress management techniques currently in practice, and the participants' overall perception of their equilibrium between professional obligations and personal well-being.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Summary: Teacher's Level of Stress

Table 1 shows the teacher's level of stress in terms of the four (4) dimensions.

Table 1

Summary on the Teacher's Level of Stress

	Dimensions	Overall Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Rank
1	Workload and Time Pressure	2.63	High	3.5
2	Student-Related Stressors	2.75	High	1
3	Professional and Organizational Factors	2.63	High	3.5
4	Personal and Social Stressors	2.64	High	2
	OWM	2.66	High	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 (Very High); 2.50-3.24 (High); 1.75-2.49 (Moderate) 1.00-1.74 (Low)

Teacher-respondents reported that student-related stressors obtained the highest overall weighted mean of 2.75, ranked 1st, indicating that factors associated with learners such as behavior, motivation, and academic readiness are the most prominent sources of stress among teachers. Following this, personal and social stressors garnered a mean of 2.64, ranked 2nd, suggesting that challenges related to work-life balance and personal responsibilities also significantly contribute to teachers' stress levels. On the other hand, both workload and time pressure and professional and organizational factors received the lowest mean of 2.63, ranked 3.5, although still interpreted as "High," indicating that these dimensions are slightly less dominant but remain substantial contributors to overall stress. The composite or overall weighted mean of 2.66, interpreted as "High," suggests that teachers generally experience a high level of stress across all identified dimensions.

The findings indicate that teacher stress is multidimensional, with student-related factors emerging as the most influential domain. This suggests that direct interaction with learners particularly in managing behavior, addressing diverse needs, and improving academic readiness places the greatest psychological and professional demand on teachers. The high ranking of personal and social stressors further highlights the interconnectedness between teachers' professional responsibilities and their personal lives, reinforcing the presence of work-life imbalance.

Although workload and organizational factors ranked lowest, their "High" descriptive equivalent indicates that these stressors remain pervasive and cannot be disregarded. The relatively close mean values across all dimensions suggest that teacher stress is not caused by a single dominant factor but rather by the cumulative effect of multiple stress domains. This pattern reflects the complex nature of the teaching profession, where instructional, administrative, and personal demands intersect. Consequently, addressing teacher stress requires a holistic approach that considers both school-based and personal-level interventions.

The present findings are supported by local studies emphasizing the multifaceted nature of teacher stress. Lobo (2024) found that student-related challenges, particularly behavioral issues and low academic performance, are the primary contributors to stress among public school teachers, aligning with the current result where student-related stressors ranked highest. Similarly, Chen et al. (2024) reported that teachers experience increased stress when dealing with diverse learner needs, reinforcing the significance of student-related factors.

Furthermore, the high ranking of personal and social stressors is consistent with the study of Chongjin et al. (2025), which highlighted work-life imbalance as a major concern among Filipino teachers. This supports the finding that personal responsibilities and limited time for self-care contribute significantly to stress levels. On the other hand, the relatively lower ranking of workload and organizational factors contrasts with the findings of Jadia et al. (2023) who identified administrative workload as the primary stressor. This discrepancy may suggest evolving conditions in the teaching profession, where learner-related challenges are becoming more demanding than traditional workload concerns.

2. Summary: Teacher's Work-Life Balance

Table 2 shows the teacher's work-life balance in terms of the three (3) dimensions.

Teacher-respondents agreed that work-life enhancement obtained the highest overall weighted mean of 3.22, ranked 1st, indicating that positive interactions between work and personal life are strongly experienced among teachers. Following this, they also agreed that work interference with personal life garnered a mean of 2.68, ranked 2nd, suggesting that work responsibilities moderately affect their personal time and activities. On the other hand, teachers disagreed that personal life interference with work occurs, which received the lowest mean of 2.46, ranked 3rd, indicating that personal responsibilities have minimal impact on their professional

duties. The composite or overall weighted mean of 2.79, interpreted as “Agree,” suggests that teachers generally experience a balanced interaction between work and personal life, with more positive than negative influences.

Table 2

Summary on the Teacher’s Work-Life Balance

	Dimensions	Overall Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Rank
1	Work Interference with Personal Life	2.68	Agree	2
2	Personal Life Interference with Work	2.46	Disagree	3
3	Work-Life Enhancement	3.22	Agree	1
	OWM	2.79	Agree	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 (Strongly Agree); 2.50-3.24 (Agree); 1.75-2.49 (Disagree) 1.00-1.74 (Strongly Disagree)

The findings reveal that teachers’ work-life balance is characterized by a dominance of positive spillover effects, as evidenced by the highest ranking of work-life enhancement. This suggests that teachers derive satisfaction, purpose, and personal growth from their profession, which in turn contributes positively to their personal well-being. Such results indicate that teaching, despite its demands, remains a meaningful and fulfilling profession that enhances overall life satisfaction.

However, the presence of work interference with personal life as the second-ranked dimension indicates that challenges in managing time and boundaries still exist. Teachers continue to experience situations where professional responsibilities encroach upon personal time, reflecting the demanding nature of their roles. Meanwhile, the lowest ranking of personal life interference with work suggests that teachers maintain a strong sense of professionalism, ensuring that personal concerns do not significantly disrupt their teaching responsibilities. Overall, the results depict a relatively adaptive work-life balance, where positive experiences outweigh negative pressures, although areas for improvement in managing work demands remain evident.

The present findings are supported by local studies emphasizing the positive aspects of teachers’ work-life experiences. Arias et al. (2024) found that teachers often experience a sense of fulfillment and personal growth from their profession, which enhances their overall well-being, consistent with the current finding where work-life enhancement ranked highest. Similarly, Yang et al. (2025) reported that teachers are able to maintain professional commitment despite personal challenges, supporting the result that personal life interference with work is minimal.

Moreover, the findings align with Mugat (2025), who noted that while teaching responsibilities can interfere with personal time, teachers develop coping strategies to manage these demands effectively. This supports the moderate ranking of work interference with personal life.

In contrast, the findings differ from De Carlo et al. (2019), which indicated that work interference is the dominant issue in teachers’ work-life balance. This discrepancy may suggest improvements in coping mechanisms or support systems among teachers in the present context.

3. Summary: Teacher’s Stress Management Techniques

Table 3 shows the teacher’s stress management techniques in terms of the five (5) dimensions.

Table 3

Summary on the Teacher’s Stress Management Techniques

	Dimensions	Overall Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Rank
1	Time and Work Management	3.25	Always	4
2	Relaxation and Physical Well-Being	3.03	Often	5
3	Cognitive and Emotional Strategies	3.24	Often	3
4	Social Support	3.28	Always	1.5
5	Spiritual and Personal Growth	3.28	Always	1.5
	OWM	3.22	Often	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 (Always); 2.50-3.24 (Often); 1.75-2.49 (Sometimes) 1.00-1.74 (Rarely)

Teacher-respondents reported that both social support and spiritual and personal growth obtained the highest overall weighted mean of 3.28, ranked 1.5, indicating that these are the most consistently practiced stress management techniques among teachers. Following this, cognitive and emotional strategies garnered a mean of 3.24, ranked 3rd, suggesting that internal coping mechanisms are also frequently utilized. On the other hand, relaxation and physical well-being received the lowest mean of 3.03, ranked 5th, interpreted as “Often,”

indicating that although practiced, it is the least emphasized among the dimensions. The composite or overall weighted mean of 3.22, interpreted as “Often,” suggests that teachers generally practice stress management techniques at a frequent level.

The findings indicate that teachers primarily rely on interpersonal and personal growth-oriented strategies in managing stress, as reflected in the highest ranking of social support and spiritual and personal growth. This suggests that teachers value relationships, mentorship, and self-development as key resources in coping with occupational stress. These strategies provide both emotional reinforcement and a sense of purpose, which are essential in sustaining motivation and resilience in the teaching profession.

Meanwhile, the strong use of cognitive and emotional strategies highlights teachers’ ability to regulate their thoughts and emotions, further supporting their adaptive coping mechanisms. However, the lower ranking of relaxation and physical well-being suggests that teachers may not consistently engage in physical or health-related activities, possibly due to time constraints or workload demands. Despite this, the overall “Often” rating indicates that teachers actively employ a combination of strategies, reflecting a multidimensional approach to stress management. This pattern underscores the importance of balancing internal, social, and physical strategies to achieve holistic well-being.

The present findings are supported by local studies emphasizing the importance of social and personal resources in managing teacher stress. Emeljanovas et al. (2023), found that strong social support systems significantly enhance teachers’ coping abilities and emotional well-being, consistent with the current finding where social support ranks highest. Similarly, Salvo-Garrido et al. (2025) reported that personal growth practices, such as reflection and mentorship, contribute to resilience and professional satisfaction among teachers, supporting the high ranking of spiritual and personal growth.

Furthermore, the use of cognitive and emotional strategies aligns with González-Yubero et al. (2025), who emphasized that positive thinking and emotional regulation are essential in managing stress in high-demand professions like teaching.

On the other hand, the lower emphasis on physical well-being is consistent with García-Álvarez et al. (2021) which found that teachers often neglect physical health practices due to workload and time limitations. This suggests that while teachers are actively managing stress, certain areas particularly physical well-being require greater attention.

4. Test Relationship Between Teacher’s Level of Stress and Stress Management Techniques

Table 4 shows the Pearson product’s moment coefficient correlation to test relationship between Teacher’s Level of Stress and Stress Management Techniques.

The computed Pearson r value of 0.408 indicates a low positive correlation between teachers’ level of stress and their stress management techniques. The computed p -value of 0.000 is less than ($<$) the 0.01 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result signifies that there is a significant relationship between teachers’ level of stress and their stress management techniques.

Table 4

Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation to test Relationship Between Teacher’s Level of Stress and Stress Management Techniques

Sources of Correlations		Teacher’s Level of Stress	Teacher’s Stress Management Techniques	Decision/ Interpretation
Teacher’s Level of Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.408**	Low Positive Correlation, Significant relationship (Reject H_0)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	172	172	
Teacher’s Stress Management Techniques	Pearson Correlation	.408**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	172	172	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings reveal that as teachers’ level of stress increases, their use of stress management techniques also tends to increase. The positive correlation suggests that teachers actively respond to stress by engaging in various coping strategies such as time management, social support, and personal development practices. Although the relationship is categorized as low, its statistical significance indicates a meaningful association between experiencing stress and the utilization of coping mechanisms.

This implies that stress does not merely act as a negative factor but may also serve as a trigger for adaptive behavior, prompting teachers to implement strategies to manage their well-being. The relatively low

strength of the correlation, however, suggests that other factors such as personal resilience, institutional support, and individual differences may also influence the extent to which teachers adopt stress management techniques.

Overall, the results highlight that teachers demonstrate adaptive coping responses in the presence of stress, reinforcing their ability to manage professional demands.

The present findings are supported by local studies emphasizing the relationship between stress and coping mechanisms among teachers. Bacamante and Sabud (2025), found that higher levels of stress among teachers are associated with increased use of coping strategies, particularly in terms of time management and social support, aligning with the current positive correlation. Similarly, Amata (2023) reported that teachers who experience greater stress are more likely to engage in proactive stress management practices to maintain their well-being.

Moreover, the findings are consistent with Xu and Yang (2023), who noted that stress can stimulate adaptive coping behaviors, encouraging individuals to utilize available resources to manage challenges effectively. However, the low strength of the correlation contrasts with Agyapong et al. (2024), which reported a stronger relationship between stress and coping strategies, suggesting that contextual factors such as organizational support and access to resources may influence the degree of association.

5. Test of Relationship Between Teacher's Work-Life Balance and Stress Management Techniques

Table 5 shows the Pearson product's moment coefficient correlation to test relationship between Teacher's Work-Life Balance and Stress Management Techniques.

Table 5

Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation to test Relationship Between Teacher's Work-Life Balance and Stress Management Techniques

Sources of Correlations		Teacher's Work-Life Balance	Teacher's Stress Management Techniques	Decision/ Interpretation
Teacher's Work-Life Balance	Pearson Correlation	1	.396**	Low Positive Correlation, Significant relationship (Reject H₀)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	172	172	
Teacher's Stress Management Techniques	Pearson Correlation	.396**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	172	172	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The computed Pearson r value of 0.396 indicates a low positive correlation between teachers' work-life balance and their stress management techniques. The computed p -value of 0.000 is less than ($<$) the 0.01 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between teachers' work-life balance and their stress management techniques.

The findings suggest that as teachers demonstrate better work-life balance, their use of stress management techniques also tends to increase. The positive relationship implies that teachers who actively engage in strategies such as time management, social support, and personal growth are more likely to achieve a healthier balance between their professional and personal lives. Conversely, effective work-life balance may also encourage teachers to sustain and strengthen their coping mechanisms.

Although the correlation is low, its statistical significance indicates that stress management techniques play a meaningful role in promoting work-life balance, even if other contributing factors are also involved. This highlights that achieving balance is a multifaceted process, influenced not only by individual coping strategies but also by organizational support, workload distribution, and personal circumstances.

Overall, the results emphasize that teachers who are proactive in managing stress are better positioned to maintain equilibrium between work and personal life.

The present findings are supported by local studies emphasizing the link between coping strategies and work-life balance. Hepburn et al. (2021) found that teachers who utilize effective stress management techniques tend to experience improved work-life balance, as these strategies help reduce the negative effects of work-related demands. Similarly, Calubiran and Despi (2026) reported that coping mechanisms such as time management and social support significantly contribute to teachers' ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities.

Moreover, the findings align with Bonifacio et al. (2025), who highlighted that stress management practices enhance teachers' well-being and facilitate better role integration between work and personal life. However, the relatively low correlation contrasts with Mañas and Ang (2025), which found a stronger relationship, suggesting that institutional factors such as administrative support and workload policies may further influence work-life balance. These studies affirm that stress management techniques are significantly associated with teachers' work-life balance, underscoring their importance in promoting well-being, while also recognizing that balance is shaped by a combination of personal and organizational factors (Arbia et al., 2023).

Based on the foregoing results of the study, the researcher concluded that: Teachers experienced a high level of stress across all dimensions, particularly in student-related stressors, followed by personal and social stressors, workload and time pressure, and professional and organizational factors, indicating that both instructional and non-instructional demands significantly affect teachers' well-being; teachers' work-life balance was generally positive, with strong work-life enhancement, moderate work interference with personal life, and minimal personal life interference with work, suggesting that while teaching provides fulfillment and personal growth, challenges in managing work demands remain evident; teachers demonstrated consistent use of stress management techniques, particularly in time and work management, social support, and spiritual and personal growth, indicating that teachers actively employ adaptive and resilience-based coping mechanisms; a low positive correlation was found between teachers' level of stress and their stress management techniques, indicating that as stress increases, teachers tend to utilize coping strategies more frequently; a low positive correlation was also found between teachers' work-life balance and their stress management techniques, suggesting that the use of effective coping strategies contributes to better management of work and personal life; and the proposed action plan to minimize teachers' stress and improve work-life balance is aligned with the identified needs of teachers, providing targeted strategies in workload management, professional support, wellness programs, and capacity-building initiatives to promote a healthier and more sustainable teaching environment.

In view of the conclusion of the study, the following are recommended: School administrators may consider reviewing and streamlining teachers' administrative tasks, reduce excessive paperwork, and ensure equitable distribution of teaching loads and coordinatorship roles to minimize workload-related stress; developing interventions addressing students' academic readiness, behavior, and motivation, such as remediation programs, guidance services, and classroom management training, to reduce student-related stress among teachers, establishing clear policies that protect teachers' personal time, such as limiting after-work communication, scheduling activities within official hours, and promoting flexible work arrangements when possible, designing and implementing wellness initiatives focusing on physical, emotional, and mental health, including stress management workshops, counseling services, and recreational activities to support teachers' overall well-being, and fostering teamwork, peer mentoring, and professional learning communities to strengthen social support systems among teachers and promote shared responsibilities; the Department of Education may offer relevant and accessible training programs that enhance teachers' instructional competence, stress management skills, and adaptability to changing educational demands; policymakers and School administrators may advocate better salary structures, incentives, and recognition programs to address financial stress and enhance teachers' motivation and job satisfaction; teachers may be encouraged to engage more in underutilized strategies such as physical exercise, delegation of tasks, and open communication of personal needs to further enhance their coping mechanisms; school administrators may adopt the proposed action plan as a structured guide in addressing teacher stress and improving work-life balance, ensuring collaboration among stakeholders for sustainable implementation; and future researchers are encouraged to conduct further studies exploring additional variables such as organizational support, leadership styles, and student outcomes, or use longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to gain deeper insights into teachers' stress and work-life balance.

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