

Lived Experiences of Elementary Teachers about Mental Health during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Basis for Intervention Initiatives

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ABSTRACT:- In this study, a phenomenological approach was employed to describe the lived experiences of elementary teachers in Daet North District, Daet, Camarines Norte about their mental health through their motivation to stay in the profession, challenges they faced, coping mechanisms, and support services received from the Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Health (DOH), School Parent-Teachers Association (SPTA) and professional organizations. Findings revealed that teachers stay in the profession because of the salary which allows them to provide for their families, love of children, and the recognition of their worth. Most of them experienced challenges with the heavy workload, shift in the modality of teaching and learning, classroom discipline and pupils' performance, submission of reports, uneven delegation of tasks, dealing with superiors and colleagues, and enduring health problems. Moreover, to cope with these difficulties, prayers, planting, talking, and spending time with family and friends help them to relieve the burden. Finally, teachers received limited mental health-related support services. Thus, providing a detailed investigation of the mental health state among teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic serves as an important platform to promote awareness of their conditions. This study recommended intervention initiatives that could improve their state of mental health.

Keywords: *Challenges, Lived experiences, Mental health, Phenomenological, Teachers*

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is one of the most stressful professions in the world due to demanding working conditions and increased personal duties and responsibilities^[1], which creates an alarming concern about the mental and physical health state, and continuous deterioration of the quality of life due to burnout from work^[2,3].

Teachers as the prime movers of education were driven to adapt to the changes in the teaching dynamics with the onslaught of the COVID 19-pandemic; from the traditional classroom to remote distance learning and though, lacking the skills to embark on the new virtual arena, they embraced the challenge of the profession with anxiety, doubt, fear and risks for their health. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)^[4] acknowledged that the adverse effects of sudden school closures on teachers are confusion and stress coupled with the ambiguity of the duration of such measures, a lack of knowledge in distance education obliging them, in record time, conduct online classes^[5].

COVID-19 teaching-related experiences were generally undesirable and the whole new life scenario triggered personal problems, the uncertainty of the future, safety and health, fear of failing school's expectations, inability in meeting pupil's and parent's demands, and financial struggles^[6], a burden of fulfilling numerous roles^[7], lack of sufficient training for the use of online resources, inadequate provision for equipment for distance learning^[8] and excessive workloads^[3] made teachers susceptible to symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.

In addition to the challenges, educators need to face with the sudden shift in the delivery of education, they, too, are transitioning their personal lives with the presence of uncertainties and the risk of exposure to the apparent threats and dangers of the pandemic with their families^[9].

In the Philippines, even before the deadly virus spread, the state had already passed a bill acknowledging the need to address the increasing mental health cases in the country and affirming that such health is also a basic human right. After almost two decades, the bill was signed into law as the Mental Health Bill of 2018 otherwise known as Republic Act No. 11036 aiming to ensure that, "*mental health is valued, promoted and protected; mental health conditions are treated and prevented; timely, affordable, high quality, and culturally-appropriate mental health case is made available to the public; mental health service are free*

from coercion and accountable to the service users; and persons affected by mental health conditions can exercise the full range of human rights, and participate fully in society and at work free from stigmatization and discrimination.”^[10]

Even with this law, the Department of Health^[11] revealed that at least 3.6 million Filipinos have suffered from mental health problems in certain stages of their lives and that the depression rate in the country was at 32%. Luci-Atienza^[12] also reported that DepEd admitted that there is an increasing mental healthcare need among teachers and is committed to programs that will help them. Senator Villar as cited in the article of Abasola also pushes a senate bill to strengthen, promote, and establish mental health services for the welfare and general well-being of all educators^[13]. He emphasized that while Filipino teachers have long been recognized as heroes for their indispensable roles in the lives of the youth, they, too can suffer from trauma, psychological and mental fatigue brought upon by and heavy workload, long class schedules, and big class sizes.

However, there is little knowledge about the current mental health state of education staff in the country; limited literature is accessible, and even fewer studies are published. The prevalence of mental health conditions is significantly affecting schools and yet it was underrepresented. Thus, this study intended to close the gap between research through the lived experiences of elementary school teachers about their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, identify their motivation to stay in the profession, the challenges they face, their coping mechanisms and the support services they receive from DepEd, DOH, SPTA, and professional organizations.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Participants

In selecting the participants of the study, ten (10) out of the 192 teachers in the district who took the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) test were purposively selected to be part of a semi-structured interview describing their lived experiences related to their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. These teachers

participants were with the highest severity levels of stress, anxiety, and depression.

According to Boyd, 10 participants are sufficient in a phenomenological study and Creswell also suggested interviews with up to 10 research participants only^[14,15]. This type of sampling added credibility to the study and reduced any participant bias^[16]. The respondents were highly believed to contribute to the success of the study as they had firsthand experiences in teaching and their answers to the semi-structured interview added richness or clarification to their stories about their mental health lived experiences.

2.2 Measures and Instruments

An interview schedule validated by a psychometrician, guidance counselors, and master teachers was used to gather data on the lived experiences of teachers about their mental health, their motivation to stay in the profession, the challenges they face, their coping mechanisms, and the support services they receive from DepEd, DOH, SPTA and professional organizations.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Teachers' motivation to stay in the profession

Most of the participants expressed that teaching was a challenging job that became more demanding during the pandemic urging them to teach children, prepare reports, meet deadlines, and multitask to keep a balance between their roles in school and at home. Though they were trying to fulfill their roles, the primary reason teachers stayed in the profession was the salary they received. This empowered them to support their families' financial needs including their children's education, house and food expenses, and keep their way of living.

“Teaching is my bread and butter, and through it, I can support my family. I work so that we can live and that I can change the quality of our lives. I want my kids to have a good life. I do not want them to experience all the hardships I had so I would wake up early to work and earn money.”

-Participant 2

Participants 3 and 6 shared the same sentiments. Remaining in the profession enabled them to cater to their families' needs. Participant 3 shared that she was able to support her children's education through teaching. Now, one of her children is already an engineer and she works hard for the other one who is still studying. Participant 6 also claimed that though teaching is challenging, especially for a teacher with many children in the family who need attention, the salary is his permanent source of income and living that motivates him to stay in

the profession. This allows him to provide for their children's education and for keeping all household expenses like food, clothing, and other basic needs. The monthly salary they receive provides adequate support.

Even though several respondents asserted that their monthly pay was enough to provide their family a good life, Participant 9 thought otherwise. She argued that it was only sufficient for her family's basic needs and that her desire to pursue postgraduate studies would not be possible from her meager income.

"The desire to be promoted to a higher position and to pursue post-graduate studies is another concern that affects my well-being. I also wanted to be promoted and study again, but my income was only enough to provide for my family's needs."

-Participant 9

Salary was not the only motivation for teachers to keep their posts. According to the interviewees, the job was still challenging but became rewarding with the fulfillment and recognition they received from children. Teachers' love for children and seeing them accomplish even simple things give them a sense of satisfaction. Moreover, the regular visits they get from their previous students boost their self-worth as teachers.

Participant 2 declared that whenever he is in school, he feels relaxed in the presence of children. He loves his pupils, and his heart belongs to them. Similarly, Participant 5 shared that when he sees that his pupils learn from him, he feels a sense of accomplishment. Even when his pupils are already in the succeeding grade levels, they visit him and pay their respects. He is happy to teach pupils.

Participants also agreed that salary was a good reason to stay in the teaching profession, but it was not solely a great motivation. They also acknowledged that the career was both tiring and fulfilling. It was taxing to accomplish the bulk of reports, work beyond school hours, and keep up with time management. However, they loved children, and they became a source of teachers' joy. They also feel the reaffirmation of their worth.

"Aside from the salary that I get to provide for my family, I also really love doing my job. The fulfillment I feel that my pupils learn something from me motivates me to stay. The simple act of seeing them read on their own gives me a sense of satisfaction especially when they started knowing nothing except the letters. Then as time passes by, I see them reading all the words they can see around them, from the books, from the walls, from the school signs and boards. It is a very commending feeling making me think that I have imparted a part of me to them."

-Participant 1

"The affirmation of my worth and growth. Also, the good relationship I have with my co-teachers, their kindness and helpfulness serve as my motivation to stay in the profession."

-Participant 8

3.2 Challenges encountered by teachers in Daet North District regarding their mental health

The respondents clearly described the teaching profession as both rewarding and draining. Though most of the interviewees were proficient teachers who were considered capable of delivering instruction with mastery, managing diverse learners through pupil-centered environment and relevant experiences, assessing their progress and achievement, and developing professional linkages, teachers face varied challenges affecting their mental health and in return, influences their well-being and quality of life. Among these challenges were classroom management, pupils' attitude, and discipline.

"I appeal to my pupils by saying, 'Children, my throat is already bleeding, don't you feel pity on me? Sometimes, my chest feels heavy and I also have high blood pressure. It is difficult to teach when learners do not follow instructions and it is harder to manage the class because I also consider safety precautions like keeping my distance. My actions are limited due to the pandemic. There will be no learning if there is no discipline.'"

-Participant 3

Participants also agreed that managing their classes was difficult due to the individual differences of their learners. Each pupil showed unique set of abilities and weaknesses and thus, teachers need to adapt to their learning needs.

On the other hand, Participant 4 claimed that unruly classes resulted from requiring teachers to submit urgent reports. As a result, teachers' focus on teaching and pupils' time for learning was sacrificed to comply with the data demanded.

“Classroom management and time management are difficult for me. I consider these two hard to deal with. If there were reports to be made and I was still having a class, I do not know which to prioritize. For me to submit the urgent report, I give seat work to my pupils while I do the paperwork. However, the class becomes disorderly after some time. I feel restless without an opportunity to take a breather. My thoughts are occupied with so much work that’s why sometimes, even if I am in a seminar and reports and documents are to be submitted, I comply while being in the session.”

-Participant 4

Similarly, Participant 6 asserted that the absence of activity sheets and practice worksheets contributed greatly to the misbehavior of learners. These materials could help in managing the class, though, preparing such posed another challenge to the teachers.

“Preparing for classroom activities for all the subjects proved to be a challenge because in the absence of these worksheets, and practice exercises pupils become unruly. They like to be engaged in many learning opportunities. But these activities must be done. Sometimes, during break time which was supposed to give me a little bit of break from work but instead, I am still printing.”

-Participant 6

She also emphasized that planning the activities and lessons takes much of her time especially since she had limited references.

Relative to the reports teachers were required to immediately submit, respondents also pointed out the hectic time boundaries and frequencies as such were sent through their group chats. These caused them to doubt its significance to the teaching profession and triggered them to feel agitated and lose interest in opening and knowing the content of any message in the chat.

“Saturdays and Sundays should be respected as teachers’ private time; a time to rest and relax our minds. Announcements should be posted at least by Friday so that reports can be accomplished within the day. Sundays are supposed to be worship days but there are still tasks to be done.”

-Participant 3

Other respondents also pointed out that the rigid time schedule in the submission of reports and announcements coincided with school responsibilities particularly with teachers’ desire to teach reading and remediation lessons to academically challenged learners, preparation of online and offline activities and managing their home obligations as parents to their children. Moreover, teachers wanted to produce learners who would stand out among other pupils. With these wishes, interviewees claimed that their mental health was affected, and the stress level was high.

“After class hours, I still needed to conduct remediation lessons, particularly for reading. For almost one school year, we taught reading after class hours until 5 in the afternoon. Pupils need to learn to read with comprehension for they will have additional subjects in the succeeding grade level. It was very tiresome. I could not do anything else aside from teaching reading, printing, and preparing lessons. I could no longer care about the laundry at home.”

-Participant 6

It could be noted that teachers conduct remediation lessons and after class reading to instill the skill among the learners necessary to cope with the succeeding grade levels. Participant 2 shared her belief that pupils’ performances at the next level served as her validation in teaching.

“I want my pupils to be achievers because they carry my name in the succeeding grade level. They will be asked, ‘Who was your teacher last year?’ That’s why I am really determined to make my pupils learn and even if it is only writing they can learn, at least they know how to write properly.”

-Participant 2

Moreover, participants claimed that the lack of training relevant to the conduct of modalities and the limitations of knowledge with computers caused them to test multiple ways to carry out instruction. Though,

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they had learned along the process through discovering and exploring the learning software applications, they suffered a great deal of stress to live up the expectations of distance learning.

“I was depressed during those times because I had both online and modular classes. I was confused. I felt burdened. The preparation of PowerPoint presentations and online activities took so much of my time as I ensured that the lessons were interactive and could guarantee learning through long distances.”

-Participant 4

“I needed to teach online classes but I never had any training in doing so. There were no guidelines or directives on what software to use. I feel like we were left to fend for ourselves. We needed to take care of it and that was stressful. Whenever I get disconnected in a meeting, I panic. I am stressed out. Also, the limitation of gadgets to use in class is another challenge.”

-Participant 5

With obligations in school and at home, teachers, indeed, endured a heavy burden to keep both. Participants described teachers as trying to sustain the delicate balance between maintaining a good home for their children and a convenient classroom for their learners. At times, they were not able to eat and sleep well and they sacrificed a portion of their budget to fulfill tasks in advance.

However, Participant 2 claimed that eating meals at a regular interval is necessary to maintain keep one's good health and be protected from the virus.

“I try to maintain real good habits so that I will not feel drained. I eat food with lots of vegetables. It is a way to combat the virus. I cannot get sick.”

-Participant 2

Coupled with the responsibility of fulfilling roles in school and at home, teachers also feared for their own safety and for the lives of their loved ones.

“The fear for my safety while performing my responsibilities in school. Though health kits were provided, I always felt fear every time I faced parents on the release and retrieval of modules and pupils' work. I also don't know if DepEd has counterpart measures if I get sick and infected that's why the uncertainty for my safety was heightened since I have children dependent on me.”

-Participant 4

Respondents also identified the relationship with their co-teachers, superior and parents as a source of challenge to their mental health. Though teachers recognized classroom management and pupils' discipline to be the primary source of their stress, they also claimed that addressing it was much easier than dealing with their co-teachers, school heads, and parents.

“Leadership styles affect my well-being as a teacher. If the school head doesn't know how to show appreciation and acknowledgment, I feel less valued especially when all that he can see is my shortcomings. So, when a problem arises in school, I no longer bother myself with it. Motivating myself to adapt to the leadership style of my superior is more challenging than managing my pupils.”

-Participant 2

Participant 9 interjected that the school head's leadership style affected teachers' mental health specifically through dealing with his subordinates. Showing unjust treatment and creating a prejudiced working environment, teachers became less motivated and stressed to work.

“Poor leadership shown through relations with teachers and school management affected my mental health. I can see that the school head takes sides and favors a few teachers. Those who were branded as his favorites received a much more favorable condition such as a lesser teaching load. Once, I voice out my concerns or observations, I can get on my principal's bad side.”

-Participant 9

However, a couple of participants argued with the statements above. Some school heads were asking for the reports only because they, too, were required to submit it. They also pointed out that their principal showed care for teachers' welfare during the pandemic and assisted them in every possible way.

Other respondents claimed that it was not the interactions between the school head and colleagues within the school that gave additional stress and burden to teachers. It was, however, the expectations that came from the position held particularly by those who were highly proficient teachers.

"Coping with the expectations of others is also a source of stress. I think the expectation of how I perform my duty, manage my class, and maintain my classroom is high. I must live up to my position. I must be a role model. Classroom management, teaching, class observations, assisting teachers, helping the head in preparing school documents, submitting reports, dealing with parents, and managing my own home take so much toll on my mental health that sometimes I wonder how I was able to carry on."

-Participant 6

Relating with school heads was not the sole source of concern among teachers within the school system. Dealing with their colleagues was also a challenge for them. Whether it was due to miscommunications or power struggles, respondents believed it contributed to the deterioration of their mental health during the pandemic.

"Having a misunderstanding with my co-teachers and having to deal with parents' complaints about their children is a challenge. Wrong relay of information and miscommunications happen because we seldom see each other, and we cannot easily clarify misconceptions because of our schedule. Chats cannot convey feelings and sometimes, my co-teachers have already misinterpreted what I said. Little did I know, they were already mad at me."

-Participant 1

On the other hand, Participant 7 emphasized that misunderstandings among colleagues were normal and part of any professional relationship. It was not a challenge at all and never was an issue to begin with.

"Dealing with my colleagues is not a challenge. It is just there will be someone who I am not close with, but we have no problem at all. Whatever concern we have is easily settled with a simple sorry, humility and acceptance of one's shortcomings."

-Participant 7

According to Participant 1, teachers also experienced difficulties in dealing with parents. Their overprotectiveness towards their children caused unnecessary stress. Moreover, their disregard for time when sending chats for clarifications on their kids' activities also contributed to burnout teachers felt. She claimed that parents' concern for their child's well-being is understandable though, it becomes too much at times particularly if they send chats concerning their children's activities regardless of the time and day. Petty children's quarrels were also taken seriously while pupils fight today and overcome them as soon as the next second.

Participant 10 summed up the experiences that affected teachers' mental health and well-being and highlighted that burnout from work gave her the urge to stop and do nothing. Relinquishing to the feeling of being lazy and exhausted even for not starting anything yet.

"The challenges I have encountered that affected my mental health are the years of isolation brought by the pandemic, unending paperwork, and the seemingly monotonous routine work of teachers and peer relationships. Teaching is a routine, a cycle. Whatever you do today, you will do tomorrow and in the succeeding days to come. You have no outlet for emotion. You are keeping everything to yourself while your work seems endless. It is a real burden. To top it all, sometimes, even your dealings with your colleagues need to be inclusive as others might not empathize with you."

-Participant 10

3.3 Coping mechanisms

Teachers recognized the experiences affecting their mental health and well-being. As individuals bound to deliver quality education to the youth, they learned to adapt and develop ways to cope with the increasing demands of the profession and continued teaching. Even with the most challenging situations, they coped by

talking out difficulties with their trusted persons, planting, scanning Facebook posts, watching videos, dancing, and taking time off for themselves.

“Accepting that whatever is happening is a reality, so I always spend time with my husband and son, and I talk with my high school friends for some funny moments and old stories to release stress and ease my burden. It is a sort of reaffirming myself that it is okay, that I am still okay.”

-Participant 6

Participant 8 also took time to speak with friends and colleagues to confirm her feelings and to affirm that she was not alone in dealing with such a burden. Coupled with her trust in God and asking for help from people around her, she was able to cope with difficulties in the profession during the pandemic.

“Duties to be performed in school overlapped with the obligations at home and in church. I asked myself if I was the only one feeling burdened with work. I needed to reaffirm these feelings so I talked with my co-teachers and friends to draw strength from them, to check that what I was feeling was true and that I was not alone in dealing with these heavy loads. Through constant praying and asking for help from people around me. My family keeps me going every day. I am also so thankful for my co-teachers who have been great to me.”

Participant 8

Through keeping an open communication with their friends and loved ones, teachers were able to realize that challenges in life really happen and those challenges gave them lessons and helped them be stronger. They, too, became appreciative of the support system they had in dealing with their difficulties.

Participant 5 agreed that having a support mechanism to address her struggles was easier than having none. With this, she could filter the sources of her stress and the limitation of her tolerance. She also identified spending

time with her family, planting and scrolling posts on online site as her coping methods.

“I experienced difficulties, I felt unhappy, and I got sick, but I needed to go on because I had no choice. Accepting and coping was the most difficult especially if a teacher did not even have a single support mechanism. Teachers needed to be steadfast to surpass all those difficulties. Planting, scanning for Facebook posts, watching videos, chatting with friends and spending time with family helped me feel relaxed doing these things.”

-Participant 5

Similarly, Participant 3 acknowledged the importance of self-preservation during stressful situations. She emphasized that teachers needed to stop, pause and take a breather before performing obligations again. She approved of planting as a form of relaxation and checking on oneself while carrying out one's responsibilities.

“I felt the importance of self-preservation. When stressful situations come, only yourself can help you. Stop and pause. Inhale and exhale. I need to be ready and heal myself before performing my obligations once again, both in school and at home. In school, whenever I feel something wrong with me, I sat down. I try to hide my condition to my pupils. I drink water and pause for a while. When I feel I a bit better, I resume teaching in front of my class. At home, I plant as a form of relaxation and identified myself as one of the plantitas (persons who takes care and collect different kinds of plants).”

-Participant 3

Interviewees supported this claim. They admitted that though coping with the challenges was hard, taking a break from work, regaining energy, doing relaxation activities, going to the farm, playing with pets and spending time with oneself to reflect served as the convenient ways to keep oneself sane and intact.

“I give seatwork to my pupils every time I feel so stressed with teaching and managing their behavior. I go out of the room, breath and pause. At home, I avoid thinking of work. I do not open our group chat because I feel that it will contain posts related to work. If I were to use a cellphone it was limited to scanning videos on Facebook. Then, I spend time with my family and play with my cats. During weekends, I am on the farm, relaxing my body and mind, away from stress.”

-Participant 7

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On the other hand, majority of the respondents coped with the challenges and difficulties they encountered by focusing on the delivery of instruction alone and exhibiting a nonchalant attitude towards other situations. They strongly believed that they were teachers, and their primary function was to teach. Regardless of what was happening around them, they needed to give their very best in teaching because that was what the children deserved.

“Sometimes, I do not care what happens around me. I keep to myself, and I just teach. As a teacher, my primary concern lies with the children. I feel sympathetic to them because sometimes, I cannot give my 100% teaching ability due to lots of things I need to think of.”

-Participant 2

“I just continue teaching and give what my pupils deserve but I avoided sources of stress. Adapting to new situations while still trying to perform at the best of my responsibilities. Keeping up with whatever is expected of me as a teacher though there were limitations in all aspects.”

-Participant 9

Participant 5 added that lesser involvement in any argument in school meant lesser stress and a better health condition.

“When there were conflicts in school like lack of supply, heavy workload, and failure to compromise with work, I did not get myself involved. I let them deal with problems while I keep to myself. Lesser involvement, lesser stress. Sometimes, I felt being invisible was so appealing that I can mind my own.”

-Participant 5

Moreover, respondents detailed that rejecting some responsibilities in school gave them a little comfort especially if those were tasks of somebody else. They were always willing to give a helping hand but not all must be passed unto them to do. Moreover, evading those individuals ordering them around made them feel stress-free even for a day.

“For work, I either ignored or stopped taking other teachers’ responsibilities and made them see that I, too, have duties to carry out. I felt the need to say no to something. We all have the same job but why do they need to pass their work to me? I know others might be angry at me for rejecting them, but I have to say no for my own sake. I feel a little relief that responsibilities are properly delegated.”

-Participant 4

Table 1.
Semi-structured interview questions with responses in four dimensions

DIMENSIONS	EXAMPLE QUESTIONS	EXAMPLE OF RESPONSES
1. Teachers’ Motivation to Stay in the Profession	How do you feel about the teaching profession? What motivates you to stay in the profession?	I am trying to be okay through managing my time wisely because if I cannot, the time I spend with my family or with myself will be sacrificed. But when it comes to teaching, I love to teach. I love my pupils. So when it comes to teaching alone, I feel happy and fulfilled.
2. Challenges to their mental health	What are the challenges that you have met that affect your mental health? How do those concerns affect your teaching and the quality of your life?	The paperwork posed a challenge to teachers and sometimes, I question if these are still teaching-related. There are studies to be accomplished, curricula are changing, and there many programs launched in schools which I tend to ask about the relativeness to teaching.
3. Coping Mechanisms	How do those concerns affect your teaching and the quality of your life? How do you cope with those challenges?	Sometimes, I do not care what happens around me. I keep to myself, and I just teach. I also scan videos on Facebook and look for inspirational quotes. I stay away from our stressful group chat.
4. Support Services	What are the support services you received from the Department of Education (DepEd) with regard to your mental health? How do these support services benefit your well-being?	DepEd has conducted a series of seminars on mental health awareness. SPTA plans and spearheads team building activities during teachers’ day. The day was filled with laughter, and we were able to recharge and forget stress at work.

3.4 Support services from the DepEd, DOH, SPTA and professional organizations

Dealing with everyday challenges affecting teachers' mental health could have become easier with the help of support services from DepEd, DOH, professional organizations and SPTA. However, the respondents collectively agreed that only DepEd had provided them with the necessary seminars and training relevant to mental health.

“DepEd conducted an online seminar about mental health. The school also sponsored In-Service Training with the same topics. And these helped me to evaluate myself and realize my strengths and weaknesses. If a problem was found with my health, then these agencies can help me overcome it.”

-Participant 3

DOH gave teachers support services such as free medical check-ups but none of those were related to addressing mental health concerns.

Interviewees also acknowledged the effort of the SPTA in providing teachers with team-building activities. These had helped them feel relaxed and forget the hardships of work.

Sadly, participants agreeingly shared that the only support given by professional organizations to teachers regarding their mental health was either sick or death aids.

3.5 Intervention Initiatives

Intervention initiatives are necessary to help improve the experience of teachers in carrying out their duties and responsibilities both in school and at home. In this study, the proposed initiatives include a set of resources including a guidebook about mental health, a Facebook page, and a podcast uploaded on social online platforms encouraging awareness of mental health concerns and strengthening the individuals' ability to handle stress, frustrations, and challenges in life through coping skills and adaptive mechanisms. These intervention initiatives give teachers an eye-opener that mental health issues are not to be experienced alone. This set of intervention sources is easy to access for it is both presented in print and non-print media.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings revealed that teachers stay in the profession because of the salary which allows them to provide for their families, their love of the learners, and pupils' recognition of their worth as teachers. However, as they fulfill the responsibilities expected of them in school and at home, they are challenged with experiences that affect their mental health. Among these hardships are heavy workload, shift in the teaching modality, maintaining classroom discipline, keeping up pupils' performance, preparing and submitting reports on time, receiving uneven delegation of tasks, dealing with superiors and colleagues, and enduring health problems, they also realized talents they never knew they had and that they discovered coping mechanisms to manage and adapt to the unpleasant experience brought about by the trying times of the pandemic. DepEd, DOH, SPTA, and professional organizations gave limited mental health support services that can help teachers alleviate their health conditions. DepEd extended help through mental health-related seminars, SPTA-sponsored team building activities, DOH offered physical health check-ups and professional organizations gave sick and death aid.

Intervention initiatives, both in print and non-materials, alleviate teachers' conditions while keeping up with their busy schedule as they perform their roles in schools and at home.

V. ETHICAL STANDARDS

Before the interview was conducted, the participants signed a confidentiality agreement and informed consent. They, too, can withdraw anytime as a participant in the study. Their right to entitlement to confidentiality and anonymity was also explained. Ethical considerations and safety health protocols were also followed.

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