

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND TEACHER BURNOUT IN THE POST-PANDEMIC TIME



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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the association between school climate and teacher burnout during the post-pandemic period. It involved an investigation into the respondents' characteristics, their perceptions of school climate, and their levels of burnout. The study also looked at how the respondents' characteristics were linked to their levels of burnout, differences in their perceptions of school climate based on their profile, and the connection between their perceptions of school climate and their levels of burnout.

Using the descriptive correlational design with 144 public elementary teachers in Sanchez Mira District, the study revealed that in the post-pandemic context, elementary schools in the Sanchez Mira District are perceived as welcoming and supportive environments for both students and educators, resulting in low teacher burnout levels. This low burnout can be attributed to factors such as teachers' length of service and educational attainment. Younger and less experienced teachers, as well as those with higher educational attainment, are more vulnerable to burnout. Importantly, a positive perception of the school environment is associated with reduced levels of burnout among educators, underscoring the significance of fostering positive school climates to enhance teacher well-being and overall education quality.

Keywords: school climate, teacher burnout, post-pandemic time

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented global crisis, has brought about a profound and far-reaching transformation in virtually every aspect of human life. One of the most significantly impacted domains has been the field of education. The traditional landscape of teaching and learning has been upended, leading to a fundamental restructuring of educational practices, methodologies, and systems. As countries around the world grappled with the challenges and uncertainties brought on

by the pandemic, the education sector found itself at the forefront of adaptation and innovation. Institutions of learning have to explore the intricate ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the educational landscape, fundamentally altering how knowledge is imparted and acquired, and shedding light on the remarkable resilience and adaptability of educational institutions, educators, and learners in the face of an extraordinary global crisis.

As the number of COVID-19 cases begins to recede, and a semblance of normalcy returns to many aspects of life, the educational sector stands at the precipice of a new phase - the post-pandemic era. This transition period brings its own set of challenges, particularly for educators who were forced a rapid shift to remote learning, redefining classroom dynamics, and necessitating the adoption of innovative pedagogical approaches. Now, as the acute phase of the crisis wanes, teachers find themselves at the crossroads of yet another educational transformation. They have to navigate the uncharted territory of the post-pandemic time, addressing how they are called upon to adapt, reinvent, and harness the lessons learned during the pandemic to shape the future of education.

Educational institutions in the Philippines, as elsewhere, have had to adapt rapidly to the post-pandemic time. In this context, the school climate has emerged as a critical factor influencing the well-being and job satisfaction of educators in this era. The school climate, often described as the social and emotional atmosphere within an educational institution, encompasses a wide range of factors, including the quality of relationships among teachers, students, and administrators, the level of trust and support within the school community, and the overall sense of belonging and safety. A positive school climate has been linked to improved student performance, reduced behavioral issues, and higher levels of teacher satisfaction and retention.

Conversely, teacher burnout has been a growing concern in the post-pandemic era, both globally and in the Philippines. Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion resulting from prolonged stress and dissatisfaction with one's work. It is characterized by feelings of cynicism, reduced professional efficacy, and a sense of being overwhelmed. The demands of the post-pandemic time have added new dimensions to this problem, as teachers had to navigate unprecedented challenges, including adapting to remote teaching, dealing with technology-related stressors, and addressing students' emotional and academic needs in an increasingly complex environment.

In view of the foregoing context, it is important to explore the relationship between school climate and teacher burnout in the Philippines, with a particular focus on the post-pandemic era. Understanding this relationship is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, teacher burnout not only affects educators' well-being but can also have a detrimental impact on the quality of education and the overall school environment. This is may be more pronounced in rural areas like in Sanchez Mira District where information and communications technology may not be accessible and internet connection may be weak. Secondly, the post-pandemic period presents an opportune moment to assess the influence of school climate on teacher burnout, as the pandemic has brought about significant changes in the education system. Thirdly, there are scarce, if there is any,

studies on school climate and teacher burnout in rural elementary school and in the context of post-pandemic.

Hence, this study on the relationship between school climate and teacher burnout in Sanchez Mira District during the post-pandemic time presents valuable opportunity to shed light on important educational dynamics. This is with the hope of improving the well-being of educators, enhancing the quality of education, and fostering a more resilient and adaptable education system in the post-pandemic era.

Objectives of the Study

This study generally investigated the relationship between school climate and teacher burnout in the context of post-pandemic time. Specifically, it investigated the profile of the respondents, their perception of their school climate, and their level of burnout. It also examined the association between the respondents' profile and their burnout level; the difference on the respondents' level of perception of their school climate when grouped according to their profile variables; and the association between the respondents' perception of their school climate and their burnout level.

Significance of the Study

This study on the relationship between school climate and teacher burnout has significant implications for various stakeholders. School administrators can use the findings to improve school environments, enhance teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and retention, positively impacting overall school performance. Department of Education officials can make informed policy decisions to support teachers, especially in the post-pandemic era. Students benefit from a positive school climate, which affects their learning experiences and outcomes. Teachers can better understand the factors affecting their well-being and advocate for improved working conditions. Parents can engage with schools constructively, and the research contributes to the academic community and encourages positive change in education for all stakeholders.

Scope and Delimitation

This study focuses on examining the relationship between school climate and teacher burnout in public elementary schools in the Sanchez Mira district of the Philippines during the post-pandemic period. It employs standardized questionnaires for a quantitative analysis. This study has several limitations: it relies on the honesty and accuracy of teachers' subjective responses in survey questionnaires, making it dependent on their perceptions and observations. The findings are context-specific and may not be easily applicable to other educational settings or regions. Additionally, the study's one-year duration from November 2022 to October 2023 captures a snapshot of that specific period, potentially not reflecting longer-term trends or post-study changes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceptions of School Climate

The educators' perceptions of a favorable school climate are influenced by numerous interplaying factors. Smith (2020) emphasized the importance of unanimous consensus among stakeholders, highlighting safety, teaching quality, and social interactions as key contributors to a positive school atmosphere. Hampton (2021) echoed these sentiments, underlining the significance of interpersonal connections, a sense of significance, and collaborative teamwork among teachers. On the other hand, Barkley et al. (2014) reinforced these findings by stressing the cooperative nature of interactions among teachers, students, parents, and administrators, which also positively impacts retention and home-school relationships.

Trust, respect, and mutual understanding between teachers and students emerged as critical elements in shaping a supportive and harmonious learning environment, as noted by O'Brennan et al. (2014). This was supported by Gunbayi (2007) who further highlighted the importance of robust interpersonal connections among teachers and a sense of significance within the institution in fostering a positive school climate. The sense of safety and security within the educational environment, as emphasized by Urszula (2017), not only contributes to teachers' well-being but also sets the stage for effective teaching and learning.

Capp et al. (2021) drew attention to the physical environment, emphasizing the role of inviting and conducive facilities and surroundings in creating a positive atmosphere for learning and social interaction. Similarly, Alinsunurin (2020) underscored the significance of parental involvement, stressing that teachers' positive perceptions are rooted in the belief that engaged parents enhance collaboration between home and school, leading to a more supportive educational experience and shared responsibility for students' development. These collective findings underscore the importance of a holistic and cooperative approach to shaping a favorable school climate, encompassing various elements, relationships, and physical aspects, all of which contribute to a more enriching educational atmosphere.

Teacher Burnout

Teacher burnout is influenced by multifaceted factors which can also bring serious consequences on job satisfaction, teaching effectiveness, and the overall school environment. Mijakoski et al. (2022) highlighted the significance of reduced physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion in teachers, resulting in low burnout levels, which in turn lead to enhanced job satisfaction and a more positive school environment. Einar et al. (2020) reinforced these findings, emphasizing the role of well-being and job contentment in reducing burnout and increasing career satisfaction among teachers.

Safari (2020) further emphasized the importance of effective management of work-related tasks and duties in mitigating burnout, suggesting that teachers who handle their responsibilities without significant exhaustion experience a positive school environment, strong support networks, and a healthy work-life balance. Zhao et al. (2022) extended the discussion to teachers' interactions with colleagues and administration, asserting that minimal burnout is linked to feeling well-supported, valued, and respected, rather than suffering from physical and emotional exhaustion due to excessive workload.

Saloviita and Pakarinen (2021) highlighted the role of emotional resilience, active engagement, and sustained motivation in minimizing burnout in teachers' attitudes towards students. Maintaining a sense of purpose and enthusiasm in their interactions with students reduces emotional exhaustion and detachment. However, Zhao et al. (2022) cautioned that teachers may experience burnout in their work-to-home relationship when they struggle to separate their professional and personal lives, leading to stress and fatigue. This difficulty in disengaging from teaching duties can impact their overall well-being, work-life balance, and job satisfaction. Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of managing exhaustion, maintaining a positive sense of well-being, and fostering supportive relationships in reducing teacher burnout and promoting a healthier and more effective educational environment.

Association Between the Teachers' Perception on School Climate and Burnout

Numerous studies have delved into the intricate relationship between teachers' perceptions of school climate and their susceptibility to burnout. McLean (2017) highlighted that teachers' mental health and their views on school climate are interconnected with professional well-being, significantly impacting factors such as job motivation and burnout. Kalkan's research in 2021 further underscored the profound influence of school climate on secondary school students' burnout, demonstrating both direct and indirect effects mediated through school belonging. Malinen and Savolainen's study in 2016 reinforced the idea that teachers' perceptions of school climate, encompassing aspects like student relationships and school decision-making processes, wield considerable influence over their job satisfaction and vulnerability to burnout.

Furthermore, the physical environment of a school was not to be overlooked. Matiang'i et al. (2016) emphasized that school conditions, including factors like poor lighting, noise, temperature inconsistencies, ventilation issues, and maintenance problems, could lead to adverse health outcomes for both teachers and students, thereby contributing to burnout. Conversely, Dearing's 2011 research illuminated the protective effect of a positive school climate, characterized by supportive relationships with colleagues and students, against the experience of burnout.

Yao et al. (2015) further substantiated these findings by demonstrating that educators who held a more positive view of their school environment, including aspects like support, collaboration, and a sense of belonging, were less likely to experience burnout. A favorable school climate, as described by the authors, instills feelings of security, job satisfaction, and a sense of value, ultimately fostering resilience and reducing the risk of the emotional and physical exhaustion often associated with burnout. In essence, the perception of school climate by teachers plays a pivotal role in shaping their overall well-being and job satisfaction, with a more favorable climate correlating with lower levels of burnout (Yao et al., 2015; Dearing, 2011; Matiang'i et al., 2016; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Kalkan, 2021; McLean, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive correlational research design, encompassing two key components. The descriptive facet entailed the descriptive of respondents' profile, their perceptions of the school climate, and their levels of burnout. Meanwhile, the correlational dimension focused on elucidating the association between the school climate and teacher burnout, as well as the correlation between teacher burnout and their individual profile variables.

Locale of the Study

The selection of Sanchez Mira District, Division of Cagayan, as the study's location is strategically significant. With its 19 public elementary schools, it offers a comprehensive and representative setting for the research, ensuring a diverse participant pool from various schools with potentially distinct school climates. This geographical specificity allows for an in-depth examination of local factors affecting school climate and teacher burnout during the post-pandemic, providing valuable insights for educational practitioners and policymakers in the region by delving into the intricacies of this particular educational context.

Respondents of the Study

To comprehensively examine the relationship between school climate and teacher burnout, this study included teacher-respondents from kindergarten to fifth grade across various public elementary schools in the Sanchez Mira District of the Division of Cagayan. While the research aimed for a complete enumeration, logistical constraints led to the exclusion of some teachers who were unavailable or on official travel/business during data collection. In total, 144 respondents participated in the study, distributed across the elementary schools.

Research Instruments

Data collection for this research was conducted through survey questionnaires, consisting of three parts. Part I gathered demographic information about participating teachers, including age, gender, civil status, length of service, and educational attainment. Part II assessed school climate using a modified instrument, employing a four-point Likert scale to measure teachers' perceptions and experiences within various aspects of the school environment, adapted from the PBIS School Climate Survey for Personnel. Part III focused on teacher burnout, with questions related to career satisfaction, administrative support, coping strategies for work-related stress, and attitudes toward students, adapted from the Teacher Burnout Scale with modifications for the post-pandemic context.

Research Procedure

Following the acceptance of the dissertation proposal, the researcher, in collaboration with designated research enumerators, obtained permissions from school principals or teacher-in-charge with formal endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School.

Once approvals were secured, the research team distributed and collected questionnaires in each participating elementary school. Respondents received an orientation emphasizing the research's objectives and significance, stressing the importance of candid and truthful responses. They were assured of the strict confidentiality and anonymity of their input.

Data Analysis

The study employed various statistical tools, including descriptive statistics for understanding respondents' profile and weighted mean to assess school climate perceptions and teacher burnout levels using different scales. It also used statistical tests like Pearson's correlation, chi-square, t-test, and one-way ANOVA to investigate and validate the hypotheses, enabling a comprehensive analysis of data relationships and differences.

RESULTS

Respondents' Profile

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Male	31	21.5%
Female	113	78.5%
Age		
30 years old or younger	17	11.8%
31-40 years old	41	28.5%
41-50 years old	40	27.8%
51-60 years old	38	26.4%
61 years old or older	8	5.6%
Mean – 43.91		
Civil Status		
Single	14	9.7%
Married	125	86.8%
Widowed	5	3.5%
Length of Service		
5 years and below	19	13.2%
6-10 years	33	22.9%
11-15 years	32	22.2%
16-20 years	42	29.2%
Highest Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's Degree	43	29.9%
Master's Degree	77	53.5%
Doctorate Degree	24	16.7%

Table 1 reveals that most of the respondents are female (113 or 78.5%) and they are between the ages of 31 and 40 (41 or 28.5%). The mean age of the respondents is 44 years. Moreover, majority of the respondents are married (125 or 86.8%), have been employed for 16 to 20 years and are master's degree graduates (77 or 53.5%).

Teachers' Perceptions of their School Climate

Table 2. Respondents' Perceptions of School Climate across all dimensions

Dimensions of School Climate	Mean	Descriptive Value
Staff Connections	3.87	Very favorable
Structure for Learning	3.78	Very favorable
Teacher and Students Relations	3.80	Very favorable
Student to Student Relations	3.56	Very favorable
School Safety	3.45	Very favorable
Physical Environment	3.70	Very favorable
Parent Involvement	3.49	Very favorable
Overall Mean	3.66	Very favorable

Table 2 presents that the general perception of the respondents on their school climate across all the dimensions is "very favorable" ($x=3.66$). This finding indicates a strong, positive consensus among the respondents regarding their school environment, encompassing various factors such as safety, teaching quality, and social interactions.

The dimension with the highest mean is "Staff Connections" ($x=3.87$ - Very favorable). This finding signifies an exceptionally positive and supportive educational environment. It also suggests that the school excels in every aspect of its climate, including factors like safety, teaching quality, parent involvement, and physical facilities. Such a rating also indicates that the school is not only academically strong but also fosters a nurturing, inclusive, and engaging atmosphere for students, teachers, and the broader school community.

The dimension which obtained the lowest mean is school safety ($x=3.45$ - very favorable". This finding implies that the respondents have a highly positive view of the safety and security within their school. It also indicates that they feel the school is a safe and secure environment, where measures are in place to ensure the well-being of students and staff.

Level of Teachers' Burnout

Table 3. Teachers' Burnout across all dimensions

Dimensions of Teacher Burnout	Mean	Descriptive Value
Career Satisfaction	1.38	Very Low
Job Responsibilities	1.50	Very Low

Attitudes Towards Colleagues and Administration	1.36	Very Low
Attitudes Towards Students	1.46	Very Low
Work-to-Home Relationship	2.62	High
Overall Mean	1.66	Very low

Table 3 presents that the overall perception of the respondents on their burnout is "very low" ($x=1.66$). This finding signifies that they are experiencing less physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion due to their work. This is typically a positive sign for the school environment, as it suggests that teachers are better able to sustain their motivation and enthusiasm for teaching. Low teacher burnout can lead to improved job satisfaction, more effective teaching, and a healthier, more supportive school climate, ultimately benefiting both educators and students.

The dimension with the highest mean is "Work-to-Home Relationship" ($x=2.62$ - High). This finding signifies that the demands of their work are significantly affecting their personal lives and well-being. It may also indicate that teachers are finding it challenging to balance their professional responsibilities with their personal and family life, potentially leading to stress and fatigue.

The dimension with the lowest mean is along "attitudes towards colleagues and administration" suggesting that teachers are experiencing minimal feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, or reduced personal accomplishment in their interactions with coworkers and school leadership. This is also indicative of a positive and supportive school culture where teachers feel valued, respected, and well-supported, which can lead to higher job satisfaction, improved teacher retention, and ultimately a more conducive environment for effective teaching and student learning.

Relationship between the respondents' profile variables and their burnout level

Table 4. Association between the profile variables of the respondents and their burnout level

Profile	r – value	prob - value	Remarks
Age	0.073	0.534	Not Significant
Length of Service	-0.398*	0.047	Significant
Profile	x^2 – computed value	prob - value	Remarks
Sex	14.640	0.964	Not Significant
Civil Status	1.039	0.460	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	4.013	0.090	Significant

*-Significant @ 0.05

Table 4 shows that length of service ($p=0.047$) and highest educational attainment ($p=0.090$) are significantly associated with teachers' burnout except for age ($p=0.534$), sex ($p=0.964$), and civil status. The finding shows that novice or younger teachers in

the service experience higher burnout levels compared to their more experienced counterparts. Moreover, those who have attained higher level of educational attainment have high burnout level.

Difference in the respondents' level of perception of school climate when grouped according to their profile variables

Table 5. Comparison on the respondents' level of perception of school climate when grouped according to their profile variables

Profile		Mean	t-value	P-value	Remarks
Sex	Male	3.68	0.043	0.836	Not Significant
	Female	3.66			
Profile		Mean	F-value	P-value	Remarks
Age	30 years old or younger	3.66	0.953	0.439	Not Significant
	31-40	3.62			
	41-50	3.76			
	51-60	3.66			
	61 years old or older	3.74			
Civil Status	Single	3.68	0.135	0.874	Not Significant
	Married	3.68			
	Widowed	3.60			
Length of Service	5 years and below	3.65	0.305	0.874	Not Significant
	6-10	3.63			
	11-15	3.69			
	16-20	3.73			
	21 years or more	3.90			
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	3.71	0.882	0.418	Not Significant
	Master's Degree	3.63			
	Doctorate Degree	3.70			

Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in the teachers' perception of their school climate when grouped according to their profile variables. In other words, sex ($t=0.043$), age ($f=0.953$), civil status ($f=0.135$), length of service ($f=0.305$) and highest educational attainment ($f=0.882$) do not explain differences in the teachers' perception of their school climate. Thus, the null hypothesis of the study is accepted.

Relationship between school climate and teacher burnout

Table 6. Association between school climate and teacher burnout

Variables	r – value	prob - value	Remarks
Teachers’ perception on school climate as a source of burnout and their burnout level	-0.335**	0.003	Significant

* -Significant @ 0.01

Table 6 presents that there is a significant association between the teachers' perception on school climate and burnout. This is reflected in the computed r-value of -0.335. This finding means that if teachers have more favorable perception of their school climate, they are more likely to have lower level of burnout.

DISCUSSION

In the post-pandemic era, teachers overwhelmingly perceive their school climate as "very favorable," reflecting a general consensus that schools provide welcoming and supportive environments for learning and personal growth. This aligns with research by Smith (2020), who underscored the importance of safety, teaching quality, and social interactions in fostering a positive school atmosphere. Hampton (2021) echoed these concepts, emphasizing the significance of interpersonal connections, a sense of significance, and collaborative teamwork among teachers. Barkley et al. (2014) further substantiated these findings, highlighting the cooperative nature of interactions among teachers, students, parents, and administrators, which positively influences retention and home-school relationships.

The respondents have “very low” teacher burnout during the post-pandemic time signifying that they are experiencing less physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion due to their work. Such finding is an affirmation of the study that the teachers exhibit a significantly low level of burnout when they encounter reduced physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion in their work, which occurs when they can maintain their motivation and enthusiasm for teaching. This minimal teacher burnout can result in enhanced job satisfaction, more effective teaching, and a more positive and supportive school environment, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students (Mijakoski, et al.,2022).

Results also reveal that length of service and highest educational attainment significantly associated with teachers’ burnout except for age, sex, and civil status. The finding shows that novice or younger teachers in the service experience higher burnout levels compared to their more experienced counterparts. Moreover, those who have attained higher level of educational attainment have high burnout level.

The study of Gavish & Friedman (2010) is very much related with this finding as they revealed that novice or younger teachers in the field often encounter elevated levels of burnout when compared to their more seasoned colleagues. This higher burnout rate among newer educators can be attributed to several factors, including the steep learning curve, greater workload as they adapt to the profession, and the need to establish effective classroom management and teaching strategies. Additionally, the absence of substantial teaching experience may contribute to increased stress and uncertainty, which collectively result in higher levels of burnout among this group.

Moreover, results show that there is no significant difference in the teachers' perception of their school climate when grouped according to their profile variables. In other words, sex, age, civil status, length of service, and highest educational attainment does not explain differences in the teachers' perception of their school climate. Thus, the null hypothesis of the study is accepted.

Finally, results show that there is a significant association between the teachers' perception on school climate and burnout implying if teachers have more favorable perception of their school climate, they are more likely to have lower level of burnout. This finding is reinforced by the study of Yao, et al. (2015) revealing that when educators hold a more positive view of their school environment, which encompasses factors such as support, collaboration, and a sense of belonging, they are less likely to experience burnout. A favorable school climate provides a sense of security, job satisfaction, and the feeling of being valued, which in turn fosters resilience and reduces the risk of emotional and physical exhaustion commonly associated with burnout. In essence, the teachers' perception of their school climate plays a pivotal role in shaping their overall well-being and job satisfaction, with a more favorable climate correlating with lower levels of burnout.

CONCLUSION

The elementary schools in Sanchez Mira District, in the context of post-pandemic time, are welcoming and supportive places for both learning and personal development, fostering a conducive atmosphere for students and educators alike. Such atmosphere may be reflected in the low teacher burnout as teachers experience less physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion in their work. Notably, the teachers' length of service and highest educational attainment influences their burnout levels. Younger and less experienced teachers are more susceptible to higher burnout levels, while those with higher educational attainment also face elevated burnout risks.

Finally, a more positive perception of the school environment is linked to lower levels of burnout among educators. This highlights the importance of nurturing positive school climates to promote teacher well-being and ultimately enhance the overall quality of education.

RECOMMENDATION

In view of the foregoing findings and conclusions, the following is hereby recommended:

1. School principals should continue to cultivate and strengthen the welcoming and supportive atmosphere within their schools. This can be achieved through ongoing professional development for staff, promoting open communication, and fostering a culture of respect and collaboration.
2. Officials of the Department of Education should invest in professional development programs that address teacher burnout particularly along Work-to-Home Relationship. These programs can include stress management, mental health support, and strategies for maintaining work-life balance. Additionally, they should consider providing resources for mentorship programs to help younger teachers transition more smoothly into the profession.
3. Experienced teachers can mentor and provide support to younger and less experienced colleagues to help them navigate the challenges of teaching. Sharing coping strategies, time management skills, and emotional support can contribute to reducing burnout among all teachers.
4. Future research should delve deeper into the factors contributing to burnout among teachers with higher educational attainment, as this finding is unexpected. Investigating the specific stressors and sources of exhaustion for this group can help tailor interventions more effectively.
5. Education stakeholders at all levels should consider policies and resource allocation to support schools in maintaining a positive school climate. This includes investing in infrastructure, resources, and initiatives that promote a welcoming and supportive environment, as it is linked to lower teacher burnout.

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